

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS

& VIEWS

December 12, 1999



## AFTER THE FALL

The stock market will crash. Then what?

By Dean Baker



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# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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## Letters

### Everybody Hurts

I want to respond to Kim Phillips-Fein's review of Susan Faludi's *Stiffed* ("Backtrack," Nov. 14). While it is understandable that some women may feel defensive about Faludi bringing attention to the ways men are hurt, that attention is necessary for feminism to succeed.

What causes women's sons to contribute to women's oppression? Men are completely good people who have been socialized in such a way that they have no choice but to continue the patterns of sexism. Growing up, males are subjected to routine violence, expected never to show they are hurt and denied real intimacy. They learn that they might have to go to war and give up their lives, that their job is the only important thing about them, that they must take responsibility for everything with no help, and that sex is the only way they can get close to another person. On top of this, males are treated as if they are inherently violent and incapable of humane behavior.

Men have it pretty bad, but in very different ways than women do. The ways men are hurt are what causes them to perpetuate oppressive structures. Blaming men will never work. Men are not evil, they are human beings. To dismantle sexism requires that we find a way to claim men as our allies. And that requires looking at what gets in their way.

Noemi Altman  
New York

### Pseudo Reform

Ted Kleine's article on the New Party mentions an initiative to replace Portland, Oregon's at-large elections with single-member districts ("Where's the Party?" Nov. 14). This is a blunder that, if successful, will only further entomb Portland progressives. American politics are monstrous because there is a genetic defect in every cell of the body politic—the winner-take-all gene that says it is right for groups with 51 percent support to get 100 percent of the power. This reduces elections to turf wars as each gang seeks to win everything and deny anything to the other.

Proportional representation would replace majority rule with minority representation. In simplest terms, this means a party with 30 percent support should get around 30 percent of the council seats, not zero. Proportional representation doesn't work with single-member districts, since an

individual seat cannot be divided proportionally. This is a crucial test for progressives: Will we again fall for pseudo-reforms like single member districts that only strengthen the status quo while precluding any real change?

John Gear  
Vancouver, Wash.

### Media Matters

Beth Schulman's perceptive comments in "Take Back the Fourth Estate" highlight the urgent need to develop a radical media agenda (Oct. 31).

Radical discussions of the media have been too narrowly focused on communications systems by themselves. The extension of progressive media power will require that the discussion be linked to economic democracy. Progressive legislation regulating the media will be hard to pass, because a majority of legislators have been bought by the mass media giants. It follows that if we don't expand democracy in the economic sector, we will lack the leverage we need to change political and media spheres.

Further, the accretion of progressive media power requires greater networking within the progressive media. To gain leverage with the established media or Congress, progressive publishers, broadcasters and academics will need to cooperate.

Jonathan M. Feldman  
Linköping, Sweden

### Jews for Sharpton

Salim Muwakkil is very much mistaken in his assertion that Rev. Al Sharpton is "intensely disliked" among New York Jews ("Bill Bradley Courts the Black Vote," Oct. 31). New York Jews are not monolithic. Some New Yorkers don't like Sharpton, and some are Jews. Many New Yorkers don't care one way or the other, and some are Jews. Many New Yorkers do like Sharpton, and some of us are Jews. Muwakkil should not make sweeping charges without the facts.

Rachel Stang  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

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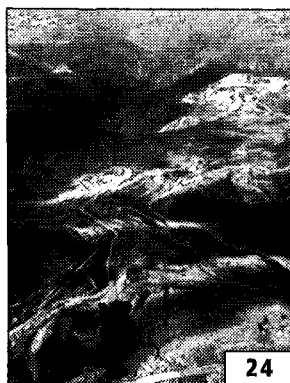
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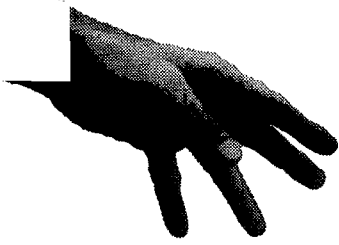
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# A Tragic Mistake?

**B**ombing embassies is something terrorists do. Consequently, when American war planes bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade last May, administration officials expressed disbelief and then shock that anything so inexplicable could happen. Now there may be an explanation: The bombing was intentional.

The London *Observer* and Copenhagen's *Politiken* reported on Oct. 17 that, according to "senior U.S. and European military sources," the Chinese Embassy was targeted because it was serving as rebroadcast station for the Yugoslavian army.

After the May 7 bombing, which killed three Chinese, the United States professed ignorance. President Clinton called the bombing a "tragic mistake," the result of some mix-up, or so the story went. NATO officials said the Central Intelligence Agency had mistakenly targeted the embassy. The administration said that the U.S. pilots had meant to bomb the Yugoslavian arms agency, located 500 meters from the embassy, and hit the embassy because military databases contained the wrong address. Or, as U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky put it when explaining the chill in U.S.-Sino relations to Congress: "What happened, as I said to my staff, is that men never ask for directions, and we mistakenly bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade."

These varied stories seemed to placate everyone but the Chinese and Russians. On ABC's *This Week*, Chinese Ambassador Li Zhaoxing described the bombing as "a horrifying atrocity, something rarely seen in the entire history of the worst diplomacy." Leonid Ivashov of the Russian Defense Ministry told the *New York Times*: "By attacking the Chinese Embassy, the United States demonstrates the drive for a unilateral dictatorship of force to meet its interests."

If what the *Observer's* highly placed sources say is true, the administration's professed regret is a ruse. A source at the U.S. National Imagery and Mapping Agency told the *Observer* the "wrong map" story is "a damned lie." Further, according to the *Observer*, the CIA and its British equivalent, M16, knew full well where the Chinese Embassy was because they "would have been listening to communications from the Chinese Embassy, as a matter of course, since it moved to the site in 1996."

According to the *Observer*, the Chinese Embassy was originally on a list of "strictly prohibited targets," but was "taken off" after NATO electronic intelligence detected it sending Yugoslavian army signals to Milosevic's forces. Three unnamed NATO officers told the *Observer* that in April NATO knew that the Chinese Embassy was serving as a rebroadcast station for the Yugoslavian army, whose commu-



**By Joel Bleifuss**

nications infrastructure had been destroyed by the bombing campaign. "NATO had been hunting the radio transmitters in Belgrade. When [Slobodan Milosevic's] residence was bombed on 23 April, the signals disappeared for 24 hours," said an intelligence officer who monitored Yugoslavian radio communications from Macedonia. "When they came on the air again, we discovered they came from the embassy compound." A Naples-based

flight controller said that NATO had a map of "non-targets"—schools, hospitals and embassies—and that the Chinese Embassy was correctly located on that map.

And an *Observer* source in the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency said, "My information is [that] the Chinese became more supportive to the Yugoslav military the more that NATO pared down the Yugoslavs' capabilities." The *Observer* speculates that Yugoslavia was being militarily aided by China in exchange for the remains of the Stealth fighter (and its attendant technological secrets) that was shot down over Serbia.

If the United States did intentionally bomb the Chinese Embassy, it may have done so without the prior knowledge of its NATO allies. Certainly German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was suspicious of the official U.S. line. Speaking from Beijing several days after the attack, he said, "The explanation given by NATO on the tragic incident so far is far from enough and the Chinese government has every reason

**If what the *Observer's* highly placed sources say is true, the Clinton administration's professed regret is a ruse.**

to demand a comprehensive, thorough and in-depth investigation into the incident and affix responsibility for it."

Who ordered the strike? According to Pacific News Service, the *Observer* reporters talked to a senior military officer who said that NATO had a "two-track" system for selecting targets in Yugoslavia. Targets on one track had to be approved by NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and the leaders of Britain, France and Germany. Targets on the other track were "solely under American control" and consisted of "politically sensitive" targets that had to be approved by President Clinton or the National Security Agency. A French Ministry of Defense report released in November acknowl-



edged that American planes not under allied command carried out some of the largest bombing raids, including the one that struck the Chinese Embassy.

The *Observer* reported an unattributed "claim" that the three missiles that hit the Chinese Embassy "were so highly sensitive, militarily, that they were deployed by the Americans alone, answering to a special directive from the President himself and bypassing the normal NATO command structure." That assertion is backed up by a report in the London *Daily Telegraph* from last June that the precision-guided missiles "carefully singled out the most sensitive section of the embassy complex for attack," the intelligence directorate. The paper quotes a Pentagon official: "That's exactly why [the Chinese] don't buy our explanation."



Ambassador to China James Sasser at the heavily damaged U.S. Embassy in Beijing after it was attacked by protesters.

And in July, CIA Director George Tenet testified before Congress that of the 900 sites struck by NATO during the bombing campaign, only one was targeted by the CIA—the Chinese Embassy.

This story has only dribbled into the United States, where the mainstream press has ignored it. Though the story was covered by The Associated Press, the *New York Times* has given it no mention. The *Washington Post* devoted 90 words to it in the "World Briefing" section under the headline, "NATO Denies Story on Embassy Bombing."

In response to questions raised by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), the New York-based media watch group, *New York Times* foreign editor Andrew Rosenthal wrote, "The *Observer* article was not terribly well-sourced, by our standards at least. I assure you that if we can show that the bombing was deliberate, you will read about it on the front page of our paper."

In turn, FAIR asked the reporters who broke the story, John Sweeney, Jens Holsoe and Ed Vulliamy, to clarify their sources. The sources included: a European NATO military officer serving in an operational capacity at the four-star level; a European NATO staff officer at the two-star level in

the Defense Intelligence office; a NATO flight controller based in Naples; a NATO intelligence officer monitoring Yugoslavian radio broadcasts from Macedonia; a very high-ranking former senior American intelligence official connected to the Balkans ("about as high as you can get," said one reporter); a mid-rank U.S. military official connected to the Balkans; and a U.S. official at the National Imagery and Mapping Agency.

"The *New York Times*, to my knowledge, has not made any effort to find out what the sourcing was," says Seth Ackerman, a media analyst at FAIR. "As has been done in the past, it sounds like the *Times* might be holding out for a named official source, which is a standard of evidence that the *Times* likes to apply in cases where they would rather not report the story at all."

The administration also has responded to the allegations. "Well, to use the fine diplomatic term, that's balderdash," Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told CNN's *Late Edition*. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, speaking to the BBC, concurred: "The idea that the United States has been sitting on a good explanation for all these months but sought not to share it is, I'm afraid, a delusion. It was a tragic error, that is the reality of the situation."

The reporters stand by their stories. "Nearly everyone involved in NATO air operations or signals command knows that the embassy bombing was deliberate," *Politiken*'s Holsoe told Pacific News Service. *Observer* foreign editor Peter Beaumont said the investigation will continue. "This is our first stab at the story, but if it takes two months or 20 years, the truth will finally come out."

"It is peculiar and noteworthy that [the Chinese Embassy] seems to be the only target that the CIA picked—a fact which will be right up there with the Grassy Knoll with conspiracy theorists for some time to come," says John Pike, a defense analyst at the Federation of American Scientists. "The explanation that has some currency in Beijing is that a secret team within the CIA is acting independently of the rest of the U.S. government on behalf of a Jesse Helms version of American foreign policy, and that they did this with the intentional purpose of antagonizing China."

But, Pike says, "I find the U.S. government's explanation for how the mistakes were made to be convincing." Even if the Chinese were allowing the Serbs to use the embassy compound for military purposes, which he says is doubtful, the United States would not have intentionally bombed the embassy because the damage such a bombing would inflict on Sino-American relations would far outweigh the benefits of such a strike.

"At the end of the day this raises a fundamental question about the level of duplicity and brutality that one believes the U.S. government to be capable of," Pike says. "The proposition that we attacked the embassy with malice aforethought as a deliberate policy and then lied about it does not conform to my model of the way the U.S. government works."

Then again, it wouldn't be the first time the U.S. government violated international law and then lied about it. ■

## EDITORIAL

### Common Sense on Cuba

Illinois Gov. George Ryan cracks the U.S. embargo

By James Weinstein

Only a Republican could have done it. The Democratic leadership no longer knows how to take a principled stand on any issue. Terrified of the pink-baiting that such a move might create, it can only dream of doing so.

What am I talking about? Illinois Governor George Ryan's trip to Cuba and his call for an end to the 40-year-old U.S. embargo against that island nation. Ryan, of course, is no friend of Fidel Castro or Cuban-style socialism. But he understands that "this country's economic sanctions against Cuba represent a 'failed policy.'" And he sees the handwriting on the wall. "There are [more than 100] countries in the world doing business with Cuba right today," he says. "And there's no reason that the United States really shouldn't be involved."

The Clinton administration and House Speaker Dennis Hastert didn't want to hear what Ryan had to say. They did their best to prevent him from going on his trip. On the one hand, they argued that it would be wrong to have normal relations with a dictator like Castro—as if for the past half century the United States has not supplied the guns and trained the assassins of countless, infinitely more vicious dictators. On the other hand, they argued that Castro needs the embargo as an excuse for his failures and doesn't really want it to end. For its part, the State Department ordered Ryan not to engage in discussions about trade and to stick to the official, announced purpose of the trip—bringing humanitarian aid.

But Ryan ignored these orders and skirted the State Department restric-

tions. He pointed out that the Illinois state legislature already had called for a relaxation of the embargo. And he noted that there is "growing support in the U.S. Senate for easing trade restrictions." One of these days "it's going to happen," he says. And when it does, he wants Illinois to be "standing on the doorstep ... ready to go in and do business."

Originally, the embargo was the soft side of our government's determination to rid Cuba of Castro and his revolution. The Bay of Pigs invasion and—after that moronic failure—numerous assassination attempts were the hard side. But by the end of the '60s, only the embargo remained, and it, too, has failed in all respects except one: It has encouraged a community of Cuban exiles, misled by CIA assurances that Castro's days were numbered, to believe that when he was overthrown or killed they would be sent back to Cuba as its new rulers.

These exiles became a powerful right-wing constituency in Florida. They supported Republican cold warriors and terrorized Democrats who might otherwise have pushed for a policy of reconciliation with the Cuban government. But since the mid-'70s, Cuban exiles have not remained a monolithic bloc, and the next generation increasingly favors a change in U.S. policy. Furthermore, even the old-timers'

actions betray their adamant rhetoric. They are the major source of the \$1 billion in remittances that exiles send to relatives in Cuba every year. Indeed, their cash is now Cuba's largest source of hard currency.

Ryan's trip was big news in the Midwest. Both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* gave it extensive coverage and strong editorial support. Elsewhere it was met with a press blackout. The *New York Times* apparently believed that this news was somehow not fit to print. The major networks all but ignored the trip. And even NPR chose to overlook it. Even so, Ryan is right. The sooner the embargo is ended the better. ■

### Kosovo Cleansed

Ethnic Albanians are now conducting their own violent campaign for racial purity.

By Paul Hockenos

PRISTINA, KOSOVO—The day Yugoslavian forces started withdrawing, the expulsion and killing of Kosovar Serbs began. The violence, initially a product of sheer rage, exploded first against



HAZIR REKA/REUTERS

Two French KFOR soldiers were injured on Oct. 15 when ethnic Albanians tried to storm a bridge in Kosovska Mitrovica. Often peacekeepers must protect Serbs and Roma from racial attacks.



## Campaign Finance Victory

In a landmark case for campaign finance reform, on Nov. 5 a federal judge upheld Maine's Clean Election Act. Approved by voters in 1996, the law establishes a state election fund for candidates who abide by spending limits and refuse private fundraising.

The judge backed an important provision that provides additional funds for publicly funded candidates outspent by their opponents—giving a boost to third-party and grassroots campaigns lacking the support of PACs and corporate interests. In a public statement, Public Campaign executive director Ellen Miller touched on the impact of the ruling: "This decision shows a clear constitutional path to reform and ensures that democracy will no longer go to the highest bidder."

**Kristin Kolb**

those Serbs complicit in the Belgrade regime's system of repression and terror. Understandably, if not exactly legally, the world looked the other way. But shortly thereafter, Gypsy quarters across the province were also in flames. And by the time Kosovar Albanian gunmen massacred 14 Serbian farmers in the village of Gracko in August, it was obvious that violence was being meted out collectively against unwanted ethnic groups. The message was clear: Kosovo not only will be Serb-free, but homogeneously Albanian as well.

In the first weeks after the war's end, some Kosovar Serbs were under the delusion they could continue to live in Kosovo. In major cities, many Serbs stayed on in their jobs. Serbo-Croatian was spoken freely in the streets. That changed almost overnight. Serb enclaves and predominantly Serb-inhabited buildings were turned into fortresses, protected by armed KFOR soldiers, tanks and helicopters. For months now, Serbs have been petrified even to go shopping for food. They venture outside only to ask the KFOR peacekeepers to escort them out of Kosovo for good.

For all of the international community's insistence on preserving a multiethnic Kosovo, by the end of this winter there won't be but handful of elderly Serbs and Orthodox monks left. Kosovo will be a virtually ethnically pure territory for the first time in its history. The chances of "minority return," a darling term of the international community, is about the same as in Bosnia's Croat-dominated West Herzegovina or in the Serb entity, Republic Srpska. Namely, almost zero.

The October murder of Bulgarian U.N. staffer Valentin Krumov marks another escalation in racial terror, and reveals an ugly, emboldened dark streak in the Kosovar Albanians' emergent political culture. Krumov was shot in the head on Pristina's main street just hours after arriving in the country. Apparently, he asked a question in Serbo-Croatian.

Or perhaps Krumov was murdered simply for speaking a Slavic tongue on the streets of Kosovo, where all of the Cyrillic street signs and place names have already been spray-painted over. As the Serbs tried in Bosnia, the point is to erase all traces of another culture from conquered territory.

The murder of Krumov must finally bring an end to the embarrassing litany of excuses commentators and international diplomats have made for the Kosovar Albanians. They have been blind to the fact that the essence of Albanian nationalism is no different than its Serbian counterpart. The political philosophy of the Kosovar Albanians was never comparable to that of the Bosnian Muslims—and the other Bosnians—who genuinely supported a multiethnic ideal. No longer can it be

claimed that Kosovar Albanians are simply exacting revenge against those complicit in war crimes. The contention that these are the acts of a radical fringe is also thin. Too many Kosovar Albanians simply look the other way.

With few exceptions, like the outspoken journalists at the independent daily newspaper *Koha Ditore*, the Kosovar Albanians and their leaders have shown precious little civil courage. (The virulent attacks of Kosovapress, a news agency close to the KLA, against the *Koha Ditore* staff—branding them traitors, pro-Serb, closet Serbs, bastards and half-breeds—shows that the venom is not directed solely against ethnic minorities.)

From the very beginning of the wars, Western policy in the Balkans stands complicit for first turning a blind eye and then sanctioning the principle of ethnic dominance. Every peace plan devised for Bosnia, culminating in the country's ethnic partition at Dayton, accepted that a given nationality would effectively control every given chunk of territory, including those taken by force. The West's tacit consent that Srebrenica must fall, and then active U.S. participation in Croatia's Operation Storm, all but gave first the Serbs and now the Albanians in Kosovo a green light to proceed in kind. It seems the Kosovar Albanians may also be rewarded with the object of their desire: an independent state.

**Terry LaBan**



**TEN YEARS AFTER**

Ironically, it was Washington that bolstered these hoods in the first place by pandering to KLA leaders like Hasim Thaci and ignoring Kosovo's moderate leaders. Washington's rationale, that it was necessary to bring the KLA under control, looks increasingly hollow: The KLA is disarmed on paper only and now has political clout and legitimacy that dwarfs its liberal rivals.

Belatedly, the international community in Bosnia has moved to disqualify radical nationalist parties in Republic Srpska and to crack down on politically supported Mafia elements in West Herzegovina. In Kosovo it must show the same resolve. This means strictly regulating the media to prevent the use of hate speech and inflammatory language and prohibiting extremists from running for office. As much as this may offend liberal sensibilities, it is critical to nurturing a civil society and democratic culture in Kosovo, one that must one day stand on its own feet.

In the short term, elections and reconstruction aid should be put on hold until the purging stops. Independence should not be the reward for ethnic cleansing. ■

## The Party's Over

For conservatives, Election Day leaves few places to hide

By Hans Johnson

WASHINGTON—As the music blared at election night parties in Richmond, Va., Republicans celebrating a historic takeover of the state's House of Delegates kicked up their heels. But elsewhere around the country, a different tune was playing for conservatives: the old bluegrass standard "No Hiding Place Down Here."

From coast to coast, the 1999 elections brought strong performances by progressive candidates and ballot measure campaigns, some of them in longtime conservative enclaves such as

Fairfax County, Va., Long Island, N.Y., and Salt Lake City. The premier off-year race took place in Mississippi, where a strenuous get-out-the-vote push by liberal stalwarts like Jesse Jackson helped deliver an apparent upset victory to Democrat Ronnie Musgrove, awaiting the deciding vote from the state legislature. Besides Democratic mayoral triumphs in Indianapolis, Columbus and Philadelphia, a closely watched campaign to preserve abortion rights emerged on top in Maine, and a ground-breaking ballot measure to rein in ATM surcharges won handily in San Francisco.

But the defeats most likely to ruffle conservative feathers came where they once ruled the roost. In Virginia's Fairfax County, even as Republicans picked up three delegate seats statewide, local voters elected the first black member, Catherine Hudgins, to a county board of supervisors now thoroughly dominated by Democrats. And, in a heavily publicized race, they replaced a GOP state senator with former congresswoman and consumer advocate Leslie Byrne.

The Fairfax defeats were an embarrassment to U.S. Rep. Tom Davis, who five years ago turned Byrne out of the House. As head of the Republican's congressional campaign committee, Davis funneled

hundreds of thousands of dollars into races in Northern Virginia. Conservative losses in this bastion of suburbia just outside Washington continued a leftward trend in America's erstwhile right-wing strongholds, such as Orange County, Calif., now the home base of liberal dynamo Rep. Loretta Sanchez.

Two other conservative enclaves moved slightly to the left on Nov. 2. Voters in Nassau County on New York's Long Island installed a narrow Democratic majority in the county's 19-member legislature, from which five GOP incumbents were ousted. A seedbed for Republican icons like former New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, Nassau faces a budget crisis that allowed Democrats to parlay doubts about GOP fiscal stewardship into electoral gains.

Voters in Salt Lake City elected liberal Ross Anderson as mayor and dashed conservatives' hopes for leverage in City Hall when the city, long dominated by the policy dictates of the Mormon Church, plays host to the 2002 Winter Olympics. As a Democratic candidate for Congress in 1996, Anderson faced gay-baiting for his support of same-sex marriage. Yet he didn't shelve the stance in his latest race and won with heavy support from the city's growing gay community.



JAMAL NASRALLAH/AFP

**The Gulf War's Legacy:** Due to a regular power outage in Baghdad, an Iraqi man uses a kerosene lantern while visiting the Ameriya shelter. More than 400 people were killed in Ameriya when it was bombed by allied forces during the Gulf War. The shelter is now a war memorial.



In Maine, voters rendered verdicts on several key ballot initiatives. A statewide measure to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes zipped to victory, handing pot foes their eighth straight statewide loss. Another initiative, which would have bypassed a reluctant state legislature to bar some types of late-term abortion, fell far short of predicted passage. Confounded by a savvy coalition of reproductive rights advocates, the campaign by abortion foes included the Catholic Church and an anti-gay group called the Christian Civic League. It foundered on fears of an all-out ban and won just 45 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, an anti-gay measure failed in the town of Falmouth.

Many a metropolis likewise played host to ballot fights this fall. In San Francisco, consumer anger at high fees for ATM withdrawals helped send a sur-

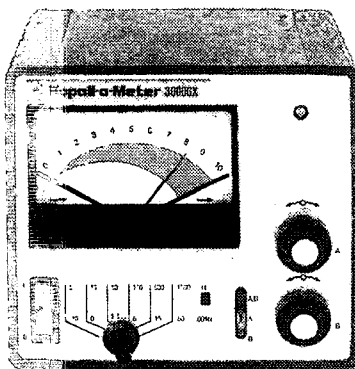
charge cap to a landslide victory. Despite threatened lawsuits from banking industry groups, such proposals have been popularized as a political platform—including in comedian Al Franken's book *Why Not Me?*—and should reappear on other local ballots next year. San Francisco voters also gave a new lease on life to the shoe-string, write-in mayoral bid of Tom Ammiano—the quick-quipping, progressive city supervisor—propelling him into a December runoff with Mayor Willie Brown.

The few distressing clouds kicked up by the day's balloting included rejection of a local minimum wage hike by voters in Missoula, Mont., and a curb on state expenditures approved in Washington State.

Still, progressives can take heart from two trends that loomed large in the day's final tallies. Turnout by African-Americans was very high in several

areas, reflecting long-term efforts to boost black registration. And the success of member-to-member education efforts by labor unions, which proved so pivotal to victories last year, helped incoming mayors Bart Peterson of Indianapolis and Michael Coleman of Columbus overcome their opponents' big-money media blitzes.

A week before Election Day, Republicans had all but declared victory on behalf of Sam Katz, their candidate and presumed leader in the race for mayor of Philadelphia, the site of the GOP's 2000 presidential convention. But thanks to a heavy mobilization by teachers unions and others, Katz, a voucher advocate, lost out to John Street, a longtime black city council member who ran on his rags-to-riches story. "We have really earned this victory," Street told supporters the morning after his narrow win. Several other progressives could echo those words. ■



## Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

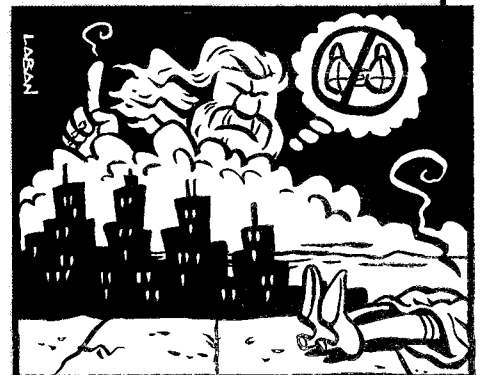
### Nut Job 6.9

Crime doesn't pay—especially when the value of the stolen goods is, quite literally, peanuts. After a truck driver killing time between deliveries at a Lincoln, Neb., grocery store cracked a roasted peanut open and ate it, the store manager called police, CNN.com reports. The truck driver, 34-year-old Xavier Ocampo, fessed up to the crime, and offered to pay for the single peanut—it cost all of a penny—but store employees wouldn't hear of it. After all, without law, civilization crumbles. Police ticketed Ocampo for misdemeanor theft, explaining that he was charged "not because of the magnitude of the crime ... but simply because it was illegal." Ocampo was lucky: Jaywalkers in Lincoln are shot on sight.

### Fetal Error 7.2

Paramedics thought they were saving a life when they rushed a fetus they discovered on a London Underground

platform on Halloween night to the hospital. That is, until they discovered that the fetus was not human at all: it was a space alien. O.K., it was actually a toy. "They had found an alien egg toy, the latest toy craze to hit the London area," Reuters reports. "It contains what looks like a tiny unborn child curled in a fetal position and suspended in a gooey placenta-like substance." According to a spokeswoman for the Underground, the paramedics were convinced "the toy alien was a human fetus, and the mistake was only discovered when it was examined in the hospital."



### Bra Burned 8.1

Underwear kills. Or so two unfortunate London women discovered after being struck by lightning while walking through Hyde Park recently. Medical examiners have concluded that the two were killed because the metal underwire in their bras acted as an electrical conductor, London's *Daily Telegraph* reports. But the coroner in the inquest warns not to read too much into the deaths; they're "a pure act of God." "This is only the second time in my experience of 50,000 deaths where lightning has struck the metal of a bra causing death," Westminster coroner Paul Knapman told the press. "I do not wish to overemphasize any significance." But more pious observers may still wonder: Is this a sign that the Almighty wants the women of the world to go braless?

# Teamsters Test

## James Hoffa launches his first national strike

By Jane Slaughter

DETROIT—Since Oct. 24, the Teamsters have stationed picket lines at dozens of freight terminals belonging to Overnite Transportation, the nation's largest nonunion trucking company. It looked like a bold move—a national strike against a brazen labor-law violator, in an attempt to force the company to the bargaining table. But participation in the strike by Overnite workers themselves is spotty at best. In his first national strike since taking office last March, Teamsters President James Hoffa may have bitten off more than he can chew.

The Teamsters call the strike “daring,” since the workers have neither a contract nor full union representation. A victory at Overnite would do much to shore up the Teamsters’ falling share of the freight business, much reduced since deregulation began in the ’70s. The union says 2,000 of Overnite’s 8,200 workers are honoring picket lines, at about 20 out of 166 terminals; the company claims the figure is less than 800 terminals.

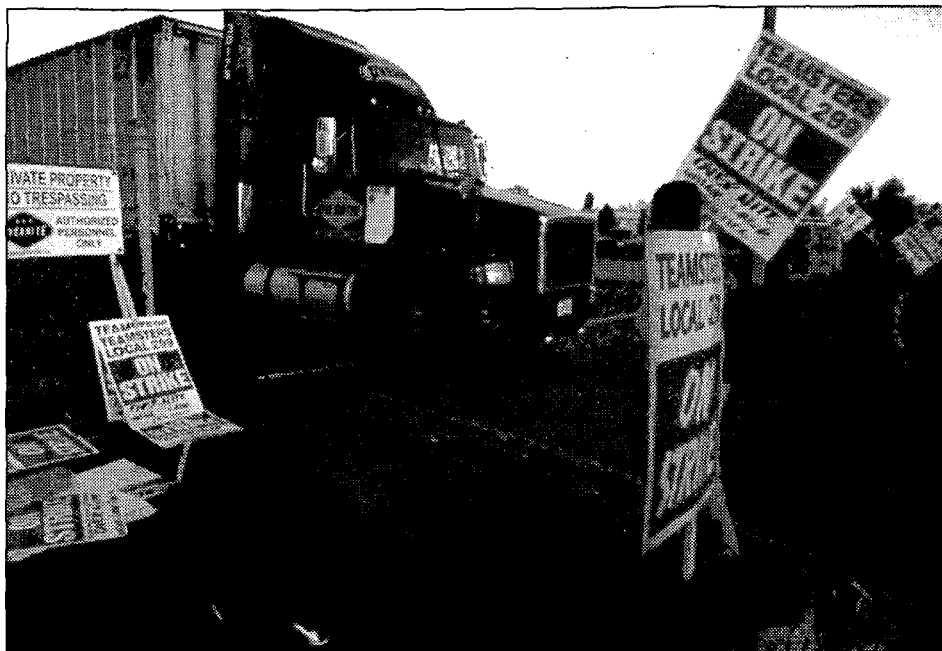
Hoffa’s predecessor, Ron Carey, began the Overnite organizing drive in 1994, but momentum was squandered after the Teamsters election scandal and Carey’s removal two years ago. By the time Hoffa entered office, it had been years since most terminals voted the union in, and many union supporters had moved on. Rather than begin again the difficult process of rebuilding Teamsters strength, Hoffa hastily called a strike. Organizing director John Murphy repeatedly promised that Overnite would sign a contract by this fall or the Teamsters would put them out of business.

In the course of the five-year drive, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has charged Richmond, Virginia-based Overnite with more than a thousand “unfair labor practices,” such as firing union supporters and threatening to close terminals. The strike is protesting those violations, and jumped

off days after Dale Watson, a fired Overnite operations manager in Memphis, said that management kept a “hit list” of union supporters to terminate. Watson said that he personally had helped eliminate the jobs of more than 40 pro-union workers.

At most striking terminals, picket lines are staffed not by Overnite workers, but by Teamsters officials from nearby

In most strikes, the union aims to hurt the company by preventing trucks from leaving the terminals. But at Overnite, the tactic is “ambulatory picketing”—supporters follow trucks on their delivery routes and picket when they arrive at their customers. “It’s not a strike to stop Overnite trucks from rolling,” Cameron says. “Once our line is set up, no union vendor, no telephone



JIM WEST

Teamsters picket a truck leaving Overnite's Detroit terminal.

locals and rank and filers recruited from other companies. “There are terminals where we’ve never had an election or organized at all, and we’re on strike there,” says campaign coordinator David Cameron. “Maybe we have zero workers participating, or one worker whose father was a Teamster and he’s just a pro-union person. The rest of the picket line is manned by the Teamsters.”

Some terminals, however, are strongly pro-union. Milwaukee, for example, is completely shut down. In Memphis, the largest organized terminal, about half the Overnite workers are honoring the lines, according to organizer Robert Ramshaw, and they make up most of the picketers. In Little Rock, Ark., most of the 33 Overnite workers are on strike, and customers have told the union that deliveries are two or three weeks behind. In New Orleans, only two or three trucks a day go out, compared to 17 or 18 on a normal day.

worker or electrician, no UPS or Roadway driver will cross that line. The Roadway driver will stop outside and wait for the Overnite driver to leave.”

This disruption, Cameron says, will cause customers to stop using Overnite. Based on information from union supporters in the terminals, he calculates it has cost the company 38 percent of its business. In Detroit, at least, some rank-and-file Teamsters question the tactic. “A lot of people were saying it was a waste of time,” says one member who has followed the trucks. “By the time you set up your picket line, the guy is already inside the place. Nobody thought we were effective.”

The company hotline says that “scheduled deliveries and pickups are being made in all geographic service areas.” According to the union, that means rerouting freight around Teamsters strongholds. The problem is that those are few and far between. ■



# Teflon Bob

Guess who's the big winner in banking deregulation

By Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman

WASHINGTON—Few top government officials, whether elected or appointed, have managed to emerge as unscathed from a half dozen years in the Washington spotlight as former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. And Rubin did better than escape without scratches—he ended his term of office with his image enhanced.

Rubin helped precipitate the Asian financial crisis that has inflicted untold suffering on tens of millions, orchestrated the bailout of foreign bankers and investors in connection with the Mexican and Asian financial disasters, and crafted or helped implement domestic policies that ensured the overwhelming portion of benefits from economic growth would go to the rich.

None of this managed to sully his reputation. Wall Street and the financial press practically beatified him. Now Teflon Bob appears on the verge of demonstrating that his immunity to criticism makes Ronald Reagan look like he was coated with bubble gum.

When he stepped down from his Treasury post this past summer, Rubin left unfinished a legislative effort to rewrite the nation's banking laws. The misnamed "financial modernization" legislation was really a deregulatory initiative—reminiscent of the S&L deregulation that led to a corporate crime spree, the collapse of the industry and the subsequent epic taxpayer bailout.

The centerpiece of the deregulatory bill, which different fragments of the finance industry have pushed for more than a decade, is the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which bars the common ownership of banks on the one hand, and insurance companies and securities firms on the other.

Although powerful interests have long backed the legislation, it has repeatedly failed to make it through Congress because of a maze of intra-industry disputes, turf fights between different parts

of the federal regulatory structure, and the concerted efforts of consumer and community-development advocates.

Another failure, however, was not acceptable to one company above all—Citigroup. The product of the merger between Citibank and Travelers, Citigroup is operating in apparent violation of the bar on common ownership of banking, insurance and securities, thanks to a loophole that provides for a two-year transition period.

Enter Robert Rubin. According to the *New York Times*, Rubin helped broker the final compromise language on financial deregulation. And while he was brokering a deal between Congress and the White House, he was also negotiating his own deal with Citigroup. A few days after the banking deal was finalized, Citigroup announced it was hiring Rubin as de facto co-chairman of the corporation.

Rubin told the *New York Times* that he was proud of his work in preserving the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), an important law that requires banks to make loans in minority and lower-income communities where they do business. In fact, the final version of the bill significantly weakens CRA: There will be no ongoing sanctions against holding company banks that fail to meet CRA standards. It will lessen the number of CRA examinations, and provisions of the bill will discourage community groups from challenging banks' CRA records.

The weakening of the CRA is only one element of the finance industry's deregulatory wish list included in the compromise legislation. The bill also will:

- Pave the way for a new round of record-shattering financial industry mergers, dangerously concentrating political and economic power.
- Create too-big-to-fail institutions that are someday likely to drain the public treasury as taxpayers bail out imperiled financial giants to protect the stability of the nation's banking system.
- Leave financial regulatory authority spread among a half-dozen federal and 50 state agencies, all uncoordinated, that would be overmatched by the soon-to-be financial Goliaths.
- Facilitate the rip-off of mutual fund insurance policy holders by permitting mutual insurance funds to switch domicile states—thereby enabling

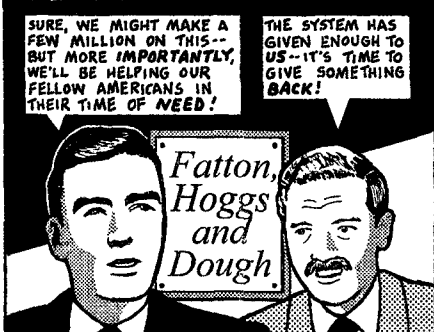
## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

FOR YEARS, CONSUMERS WERE HELD CAPTIVE BY THE GLASS-STEAGALL ACT.



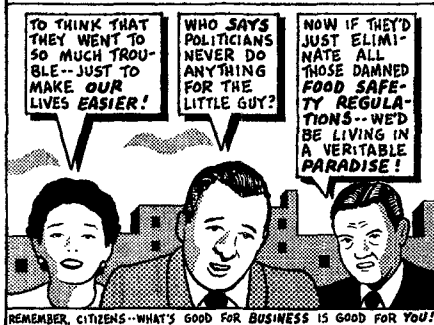
FORTUNATELY, A SELFLESS ARMY OF LOBBYISTS HEEDED THEIR CALL!



DUBIOUS SENATORS WERE WON OVER IN SMOKY BACK ROOMS...



AND AT LONG LAST, THE BANKING INDUSTRY WAS FREED FROM THE ANTIQUATED SHACKLES OF GOVERNMENTAL OVERSIGHT!



them to locate in states where they can convert to for-profit, stockholder companies without properly reimbursing mutual policyholders (a conversion of tens of billions of dollars).

- Aggressively intrude on consumer privacy (and promote a still-greater intensification of direct marketing), thanks to provisions permitting the new financial giants to share finance, health, consumer and other personal information among affiliates.

Robert Rubin helped deliver this ticking time bomb of a bill to Wall Street, first while in Treasury and then while in negotiations to land a top spot at the finance industry's largest and highest-profile company. He may well escape unscathed yet again, but it is sure to blow up on the rest of us. ■

**Russell Mokhiber** is editor of the *Corporate Crime Reporter*. **Robert Weissman** is editor of the *Multinational Monitor*. They are co-authors of *Corporate Predators: The Hunt for Mega-Profits and the Attack on Democracy* (Common Courage).

## IN PERSON

# Set in Stone

James Loewen seeks the truth in American history

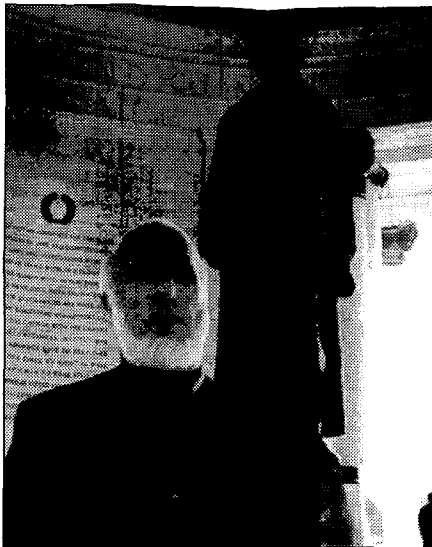
By J.C. Sharlet

WASHINGTON—James W. Loewen has read more historical markers than anyone alive. At least 10,000, maybe twice that number. "There is an element of masochism in what I do," he says. For four years, he traveled the 50 states reading the markers on the road and scouring state offices for records.

The result is Loewen's just-published, *Lies Across America: What Our Historical Sites Get Wrong* (New Press), a guided tour of mendacity across the land. Loewen has reason to believe people will read his "rants," as he calls his work. His last book, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* has so far found 300,000 buyers for a lie-by-lie refutation of 12 popular history textbooks.

Descended from Illinois Mennonites, Loewen is a lean man with a resonant

voice and a white, Lincolnesque beard. Although he says he doesn't like to be obnoxious, he's the kind of person who will ask a tour guide, "Wasn't James



James W. Loewen

Buchanan gay?" or "What about Jefferson's slaves?"

Loewen thinks those are questions everyone wants to ask. "The history Americans get in high schools and in their monuments is boring," he says. "And yet, Americans are passionate about history."

That enthusiasm was evident when Loewen and I visited the Jefferson Memorial in Washington. Hurricane Floyd had just skimmed the capital. The winds were high and the sky a bruised purple. Even so, a small crowd turned out to honor the Great Man—a spectacle that made Loewen grimace with frustration. The memorial is not quite bad enough to merit toppling, he says, but it deserves some serious deconstruction.

But four of the tourists who had braved the pelting rain thought what it most needed was photographing. The group interrupted Loewen mid-rant to ask him to take of a picture of them with their disposable cameras. I could see the gears shifting beneath Loewen's cap as he struggled to restrain himself. "Oh, all right," he said at last, forgoing for the moment the truth of history.

Although he's the kind of guy who sits through educational films smirking and muttering "Oh, right!" Loewen isn't a know-it-all. The way he sees it, he knows just enough to figure out what

historic sites are covering up. "Read that," he said, pointing to the third text panel. Then he did, aloud: "Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever."

"O.K., that sounds good," he said. "But the next sentence says, 'Commerce between master and slave is despotism.' Oh, you might say, so Thomas Jefferson was against slavery. Well, sure, it looks that way. Only what's up there isn't what he said." Or rather, it isn't in the order Jefferson intended. The four text panels of the memorial are a collage spanning 50 years. A phrase here mixed with a few words there, and, in Loewen's view, "a complicated man worth learning about is reduced to a hero."

And making heroes, argues Loewen in the first sentence of *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, is "a degenerative process (much like calcification)." The United States, he says, "has an atrophy of civic history. History gets miswritten on the landscape, and miswritten in our hearts. It makes us stupid."

As a result, we have little or no background for the debates that occupy us today. Loewen relishes the rare instances when monuments do what he thinks they're supposed to do—get people talking. Should it be called Custer's Last Stand or Little Bighorn? Should a statue of Arthur Ashe stand on Richmond, Virginia's Confederate Row? Why is Nathan Bedford Forrest, founder of the Ku Klux Klan, remembered by more markers in Tennessee than any other historical figure?

Loewen's answers are not always predictable. He's not interested in replacing one pantheon of heroes with another, and he doesn't consider himself or his books to be squarely in any political camp. His passion is accuracy, but he's more than an accountant; he actually likes monuments, and would love to see more of them. They are, to him, the conversation of a people with their past.

That is not to say some monuments don't require a bit more than annotation. Some, Loewen believes, merit a more direct form of civil discourse: "Every state history office I go to, I ask people, 'What monument would you most like to see a snowplow run over?'"

"Everyone," he says, "has a candidate." ■



# The Godfather's Way with Words

**S**ince U.S. intelligence officials have declared Mexico's powerful Hank family "a significant criminal threat to the United States," you'd think there would be more for their lawyers to worry about than a little bad press.

But the Hanks have set their sights on *El Andar*, a small quarterly about Latino news and culture based in Santa Cruz, Calif., which published an investigation into the Hanks' shady dealings this fall. "NAFTA Gang" by *El Andar* editor Julie Reynolds details allegations of murder, money laundering and drug trafficking against Carlos Hank Gonzalez and his sons, Jorge and Carlos Hank Rhon.

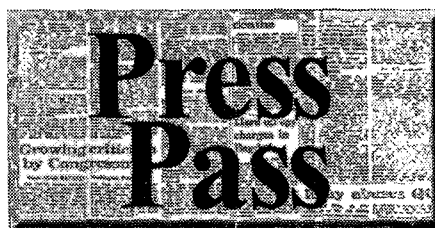
On Sept. 24, *El Andar* received a fax from Ricardo Cedillo, an attorney representing the Hank-owned Laredo National Bank of Texas, who accused the magazine of "reckless disregard for the truth" and insisted that neither the bank nor the Hanks ever had been suspected of any wrongdoing. Cedillo demanded that the magazine retract its story, allow him to screen any future articles about the Hanks and pay \$10 million in damages. "Should you elect to do nothing," Cedillo warned, "you act at your peril."

The *El Andar* staff was shocked. "I had been told they might threaten us somehow," Reynolds says. "But I was stunned. The tone of the letter is pretty fierce. I thought, am I really reading this? Can this be true?"

What is true is that Hank Gonzalez, now in his seventies, is one of Mexico's most notorious powerbrokers, a stalwart of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) who has been a cabinet minister and mayor of Mexico City. Said to choose presidents, Hank Gonzalez also has built a banking and transportation empire—and enough links to Mexico's drug cartels to be called *il capo di tutti capi*, the Godfather. "The Hank family has laundered money on a massive scale, assisted drug-trafficking organizations in transporting drug shipments and engaged in large-scale public corruption," concluded a report by the U.S. National Drug Intelligence Center, which was

leaked to the Mexican daily *El Financiero* and the *Washington Post* last June.

The younger son, Jorge Hank Rhon, 46, is an exotic animal smuggler (he was once stopped at the border with a white tiger kitten in the backseat of his Mercedes) who is known to consort with



drug dealers and assassins. In the late '80s, three of his bodyguards were convicted of murdering Tijuana journalist Hector Félix Miranda, who had written scathing columns about Jorge Hank Rhon—but the prodigal son remained untouched.

The elder son, Carlos Hank Rhon, 51, controls the "respectable" side of the family business, which has expanded north of the border. Among other things, he is the majority owner of Laredo National Bank. While *Hispanic* magazine has lauded Laredo for creating opportunities for Latinos, the bank also has been the target of investigations by the Justice Department and the Federal Reserve.

But Reynolds reveals that those suspicions didn't stop Laredo Bank President Gary Jacobs from attending one of President Clinton's infamous White House fundraising coffees in August 1996. "While one arm of the administration was preparing to expose a vast network of Mexican and U.S. bankers connected to drugs and money laundering," Reynolds writes, "Clinton and representatives of the Democratic National Committee were breezily courting Jacobs in the White House Map Room."

In December 1998, according to *El Andar*, the Fed sent a notice to Carlos Hank Rhon citing a host of banking law violations—including charges of creating "paper" board members, secretly investing

his father's money and shuffling funds to cover fraudulent transactions—that could permanently bar Hank from "participating in any manner in the affairs of a United States depository institution." A hearing is set for next July, when Carlos Hank Rhon faces more than \$40 million in fines and possible imprisonment.

*El Andar* is standing by its story. "There is no way we can retract what we said," publisher Jorge Chino told the Pacific News Service. "The information we have is true and the story was researched for a long time. They have no right to affect our freedom of speech."

Chino says the Hanks also have threatened to sue the *Washington Post* and the Canadian Broadcasting Company. Still, any lawsuit, even a frivolous one, could sink a small, independent magazine like *El Andar*, which is partly funded out of the staff's own pockets.

However, it seems the Hanks' scare tactics have backfired. The David-and-Goliath aspect of the dispute appealed to the Mexican media, which published

**Any lawsuit, even a frivolous one, could sink a small, independent magazine like *El Andar*.**

several sympathetic stories, including one in the daily *La Reforma*. In its Nov. 7 issue, the newsweekly *Proceso* ran a cover story on the Hanks, which translated U.S. intelligence reports and discussed ongoing international investigations. Calls have poured into *El Andar* from Mexican supporters, expressing solidarity and sending them tips.

*El Andar* is braced for further threats from the Hanks. But Chino sees a silver lining in the increasing willingness of the Latino media to challenge the status quo. "Decent journalism matters," he writes in an editorial in the upcoming issue, due out at the end of November. "As Latino media organizations grow in importance and resources, we hope that improvement will occur, the 'untouchables' will be exposed, and readers brought closer to a grasp on reality." ■



# RAUCOUS CAUCASUS

## The Kremlin war machine bombards Chechnya

By Fred Weir

NARZAN, RUSSIA

A Russian soldier guards his post in Chechnya as a military helicopter flies overhead.

If your only tool is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail. Russian President Boris Yeltsin has once again rolled out the one instrument in the unraveling Russian Federation that still unquestioningly and efficiently obeys his edicts: the army. With its professional officer corps and Soviet-era munitions stockpiles fit for World War III, Russia's military has been unleashed against the rebel republic of Chechnya to crack the Kremlin's two toughest problems with one blow. By crushing Chechnya's 8-year-old independence drive, it is hoping to end to Russia's post-Soviet orgy of regionalism and restore federal power and prestige. On the wings of that victory, the war's prime author and Yeltsin's heir apparent, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, will—so the plan goes—be vaulted into the Kremlin in next year's presidential elections.

The army, bitter and angry after a decade of neglect and humiliation, seems almost eager to comply. Down along Chechnya's rugged, forested border with neighboring Ingushetia, where the high, snow-capped Caucasus Mountains seem to hang on the horizon, a huge war machine has been mobilized. Artillery batteries dug into hillsides pound the Chechen border towns of Bamut, Ochkoi Martan and Sernovodsk around the clock. Helicopter gunships and fighter jets sweep in over the relative safety of Ingush territory to slam nearby rebel positions with rockets and bombs. The roads are jammed with armored personnel carriers, tanks and truck convoys headed for the front. The young Russian recruits manning this war machine look miserable and scared. Their uniforms

are ill-fitting and filthy, their high, cavalry-style boots are completely unsuited to the onrushing mountain winter, and they are often seen in the roads begging food and cigarettes. But the officers seem calm and confident, even cocky.

On Oct. 27, a band of Chechen rebel fighters crossed the border and ambushed a Russian patrol in broad daylight near Verkhni Alkum, a hill post in southeastern Ingushetia. According to the Moscow media, dozens of Russian soldiers were killed. A Russian major, standing on the camp's perimeter a few days later, admitted the attack occurred but shrugged away questions about the price of war. "We're fighting here so that these boys won't have to fight one day in their own hometowns," he said, gesturing toward a nearby group of conscripts. "If we don't take strong measures now, all this instability will spread." He had kind words for Putin: "He knows what he's doing. It's time someone in this country faced problems head on."

Then he offered an analogy that speaks volumes about the mindset of the Russian military. After World War II, the Soviets fought a little-known war against CIA-backed, anti-Soviet insurgents in the Carpathian mountains of Western Ukraine. "Those Ukrainians were the same kind of bandits, fighting us in similar terrain," the major said. "It took 10 years, but we ground them down and eventually wiped them out. We'll do the same here."

The irony of that comparison apparently escaped him. Ukraine today is an independent country and those long-buried guerrillas are being rehabilitated and transformed into



national folk heroes. The USSR may have won the war, but it failed in the long run to create a society to which any of its diverse peoples cared to belong. Post-Soviet Russia now appears irrevocably headed down the same path.

Its Achilles heel is here, in the North Caucasus. Six impoverished and restive ethnic republics nestle up against the high wall of the mountains that separate Europe from Asia: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Karbardino-Balkaria and Karecheyevo-Cherkessia. Of these, all but one are traditionally Muslim. All are rent with internal discord, and it is growing worse under the impact of the deepening cataclysm in Chechnya. "This is a colonial war, and it will end as such wars usually do: with the republics of the North Caucasus breaking free from Russia," says Franz Sheregi, a senior analyst with the independent Institute of Social and National Issues in Moscow. "They cannot be integrated into Russia, except under a colonial system. And that means endless war and dissension."

The Ingush are closely related to the Chechens, and until 1991 were united in a single republic with them. But when Chechnya opted to secede from the Russian Federation, Ingushetia chose to break away from Chechnya and allied itself with Moscow. However, Russia has since forfeited most of that goodwill. A two-year war to crush Chechnya's independence from 1994 to 1996 killed an estimated 80,000 people and ended in Russian defeat.

Though Chechnya defeated the Russian army, it failed to build on its de facto independence. Its elected president, Aslan Maskhadov, proved incapable of establishing a viable government or doing anything about the tiny republic's economic ruination. Local warlords, based in Chechnya's fractious clans, made their living by kidnapping, smuggling and stealing oil from Russia's Caspian-Black Sea pipeline.

In August and September, warlord Shamil Basayev, launched two invasions of neighboring Dagestan in an attempt to hook up with local Islamic militants and perhaps break Chechnya's isolation. They were beaten back, at huge cost, by Russian forces and Dagestani militias. In September, a series of apartment bombs killed 300 people in cities across Russia. The Kremlin was quick to blame Chechnya, but it has never been established who planted the bombs.

In early October, the Russian military invaded Chechnya in a self-described "anti-terrorist" operation that soon turned into a full-fledged effort to refight the previous war—only "smarter" this time. Some 200,000 Chechen civilians fleeing into Ingushetia carry horror stories of savage and indiscriminate Russian bombardment of their homes, public places and refugee columns. Though some of the tales may be exaggerated, Ingush hospitals are full of women and children with limbs blown off, bodies lacerated by shrapnel and eyes dumb with shellshock. "My sense is that Russian forces are trying to hit Chechen military targets but they are not being discriminating about where they aim," says Jim Ron, a member of a Human Rights Watch team that has been systematically interviewing Chechen war refugees. "They don't seem very concerned that they are hitting so many civilians."

For the Russian army, fighting "smarter" appears to mean avoiding the bloody infantry assaults that cost them so dearly in the last war. Instead, they are pounding Chechnya's towns and cities with heavy weaponry, drawing a steel noose around them. "We will lay siege to Grozny, Gudermes and

other towns, and force the bandits to break up and flee into the mountains," says one Russian officer. "There they can starve and freeze to death in the winter."

But the Chechens are a traditional mountain warrior society. In the last war, the Chechens, whose leaders cut their teeth with the Soviet army in Afghanistan, proved extraordinarily adept at breaking up their approximately 40,000 hardened fighters into small units, scattering them for months in the hills, then amassing suddenly where the Russians least expected them. "Moscow has to realize that it's impossible to prevail in a drawn-out guerrilla war in Chechnya," says Emil Pain, a former Yeltsin adviser who broke with the Kremlin over Caucasus policy. "I am very much afraid that Russia will forget the hard-earned lessons of the recent past and go all-out for a military solution. But Chechnya could only be conquered at the price of oceans of blood, and even then it's doubtful."

If the war starts to go badly—and indications are that it soon will—the Kremlin's political calculations will also go awry. Putin has climbed steadily in opinion polls as Russian forces have advanced in Chechnya. By mid-November, he enjoyed almost 30 percent popular approval, well above the 17 percent commanded by his nearest rival, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov. "For Putin, everything is connected with the war," says Vilen Ivanov, an analyst at the independent Social-Political Institute in Moscow. "If there's a military disaster, it will sink him. It may also end all hopes of achieving political stability in Russia."

## Russia claims it's targeting

### "terrorists," but hospitals are full of civilians with limbs blown off.

Even if the war goes well, Russia will be left with its most fundamental post-Soviet dilemma, which the bombs and bloodshed have only aggravated. Yeltsin's Russia has failed to appeal to its non-Russian citizens—particularly the dark-skinned, Muslim Caucasians—with any new integrating principle. Worse, rising nationalist forces are pressing a definition of Russian-ness that hinges on Slavic ethnicity, Russian culture and Orthodox Christianity. This aggressive new nationalism is strong among Russia's embittered officer corps, and the war to subjugate Chechnya is giving them dangerous new political leverage. A top Russian commander in Chechnya, Gen. Vladimir Shamanov, recently warned of "civil war" if politicians try to halt the Russian army's advance with peace negotiations. "The officer corps will not survive another slap in the face," he said.

"The search for a long-term political solution has been totally disrupted by the military action," says Sergei Kazyenov, a Caucasus specialist with the Institute for National Security and Strategic Research in Moscow. "If we fail to create a Russian civilization that embraces the Caucasian people, we will surely lose them."

Liza Nagalayeveva, a Chechen schoolteacher who fled her bombed and burning hometown in late October, put it this way: "We are a small people, but we want our freedom. The Russians say we must be part of Russia. Once I might have listened to them. But they talk only with guns and rockets, and they will never win the argument that way." ■

# AFTER THE FALL

## The stock market will crash. Then what?

By Dean Baker

**T**rying to build momentum for a progressive agenda can be difficult when finding the next big Internet stock has become an obsession for millions. Even though the extent of stock ownership is greatly exaggerated (only about half of families hold any stock at all, including indirect holdings through mutual funds), the impact of the bull market on society is not. Soaring stock prices quite literally have transformed many middle-income workers into paper millionaires overnight. The stock options available to the professional employees, and sometimes even lower level workers, at firms like Microsoft, Dell or Amazon.com, can be worth millions at current stock prices. This has created an obsession with the idea that everyone can get rich if they just find the right train to ride.

But the stock obsession goes beyond the high-flying Internet companies. It has infected all areas of public debate. The difference between President Clinton and the Republicans on Social Security, for example, can be viewed as how best to cash in on high stock returns. While the president wants to place Social Security funds directly in the stock market, the Republicans propose to do it through individual accounts.

More generally, the roaring stock market is seen as a testament to the success of American-style, free-market capitalism. The stock market apostles want to get the government out of the way and let business run the show. This gospel is being applied in all areas of life, from schools and prisons to health care. It also has become a leading export item, as the administration tries to push the American model on Japan, Europe and the rest of world, with the strong arm of the IMF acting as a sales agent in the less-developed countries.

There is a major problem with this picture. By any reasonable measure, the stock market is hugely overvalued. Typically the ratio of the price of a share of stock to the earnings per share has been about 14 to 1. Currently it is more than 30 to 1. Investors can bid up stock prices in the same way they can bid up prices of rare paintings. But ultimately people value shares based on the earnings they generate, not how pretty they are. This means that stock prices would have to fall 50 to 70 percent to allow stocks to offer a return that is competitive with other financial assets, such as bonds.

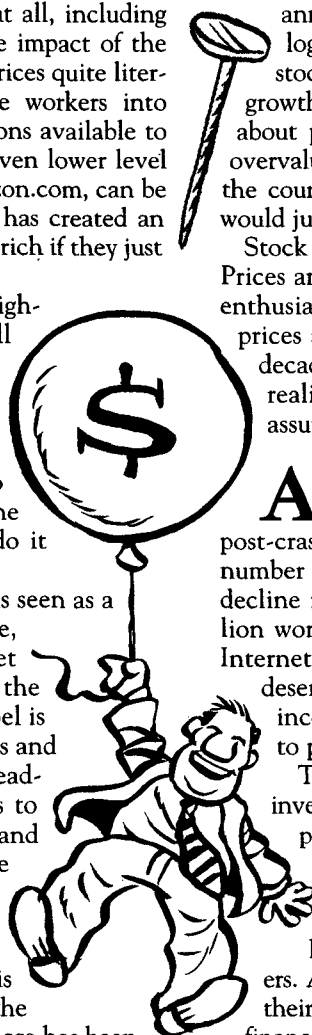
Furthermore, when the stock market crashes it is not going to bounce back like it did in 1987, when the market wasn't nearly as overvalued. After the fall, stock prices are likely to grow at about the same rate as the economy, around 2 percent annually after adjusting for inflation. This is an issue of logic and arithmetic, not ideology. To put it simply, stock prices must be based on profits, and the expected growth of profits. Even the highest plausible assumptions about profit growth would still leave the current market overvalued by about 50 percent. There is no economist in the country who has been able to develop a scenario that would justify current stock prices.

Stock prices will plunge—it's just a question of when. Prices are determined by the psychology of investors. Their enthusiasm for stocks, no matter how irrational, may keep prices at inflated levels for six months, two years, even a decade. Economics and logic can't predict exactly when reality will catch up with this enthusiasm: They only assure that at some point it will.

**A**lthough the day of reckoning may be many years in the future, it is still worth thinking about what the post-crash world will look like. Most immediately, a large number of people will suddenly be far poorer. A 50 percent decline in the stock market will destroy more than \$7 trillion worth of paper wealth. Some of the losers will be the Internet billionaires and other high flyers who richly deserve their fate. But most of the losers will be middle-income workers who were relying on the stock market to provide their retirement income.

The fallout from the crash will also hit institutional investors. Major corporations with defined benefit pension plans, like General Motors or Boeing, will suddenly have large deficits to make up. This will mostly be taken out of corporate profits, but they will try to get what they can out of workers' wages. Most unions also have defined benefit pension plans for their own workers. A plunge in the stock market could seriously set back their finances. And charitable foundations, some of which finance progressive activity, will have far less money to give out. If half of their endowments are in stock and the market falls by 50 percent, there could be a reduction of 25 percent in the amount of grants provided by these institutions.

A crash will also throw the economy into a tailspin. Currently the economy is being propelled by a stock-market-driven consumption boom. As people see the value of their stock portfolios rise, they go out and spend money. They are



ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY LABAN





spending so much that the savings rate has actually turned negative in the last year, with people almost outspending their entire income. A stock crash will throw this pattern into reverse. As people watch the value of their stock portfolios shrivel, they will cut back their spending to try to rebuild their savings. This will lead to a large falloff in demand and almost certainly to a recession. A recession would likely raise the unemployment rate by at least 2 to 3 percent. Following historic patterns, this would mean an increase in the unemployment rate among African-Americans of 4 to 6 percent.

**T**his new economic environment will require an entirely different political agenda. Millions of people will be desperate and angry. It will be important to be prepared to move forward with policies that address people's immediate needs and also set the path for an economic recovery on a more solid foundation. In the post-crash world, progressive ideas now seen as untenable suddenly will appear both reasonable and necessary.

For beginners, the nation will have to end its fixation on balanced budgets and paying off the national debt. The number zero is only important to numerologists; it doesn't matter to the economy. Standard economic models show very little benefit from budget surpluses or paying down the national debt. In the post-crash world, it is essential that the government be prepared to use the stimulus from large deficits to maintain demand in the economy. In other words, additional spending by the government can offset reduced spending by the private sector to sustain demand in the economy and maintain high-

er levels of employment. Ideally, deficit spending could be used to address some of the nation's unmet needs, such as providing health care to the uninsured or improving the quality of education in the inner cities. If Congress insisted on balancing the budget in such an environment, or worse, paying down the debt, it would guarantee that the post-crash recession would be long and harsh.

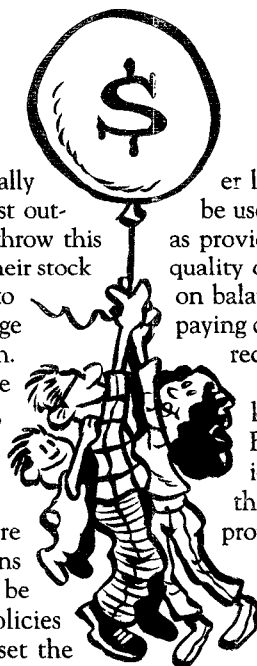
But this is only the start. The crash of the stock market is the ideological equivalent of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The soaring market has allowed corporate ideology to dominate public debate as never before. In the wake of the crash, progressives should be prepared to propose clear alternatives to a failed worldview.

Some parts of the agenda are obvious. It will be time to clean up Wall Street. The simplest way to try to deter similar bouts of "irrational exuberance" in the future is to impose a small transactions tax on the exchange of stocks, options, currencies and other financial instruments used for speculation. A tax of 0.25 percent on each purchase or sale of a share of stock would have almost no impact on anyone who holds a stock for five or 10 years, but it could prove quite costly to someone who buys at two o'clock and sells an hour later. Similarly, a tax of 0.1 percent on

currency trades, such as buying Japanese yen, won't affect the price of imported cars in any noticeable way, but it would make high speed currency shuffling very expensive.

This sort of transaction tax would not necessarily prevent future bubbles, but it would at least treat this form of gambling like any other form, all of which are heavily taxed. There is no reason to prefer that gamblers place their bets in financial

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progressives should be  
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corporate worldview.**



markets rather than casinos, horse tracks or state lotteries. In addition, the tax could raise more than \$100 billion annually. This money could be used to finance social spending and/or a tax cut for low- and middle-income workers.

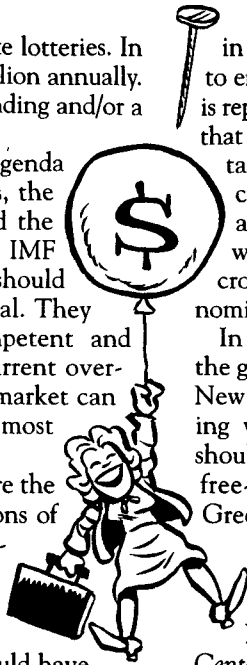
But the need for rethinking the nation's agenda goes much further. Over the past two decades, the nation's leading economists have told us (and the rest of the world, through institutions like the IMF and World Bank) that the financial markets should be given full responsibility for allocating capital. They claimed that governments were too incompetent and would inevitably get things wrong. But the current overvaluation of the stock market shows that the market can lead to misallocations that can outdo even the most inept government bureaucracies.

Consider the case of an Internet start-up, where the initial stock offering sells for hundreds of millions of dollars, but the company subsequently goes belly-up. It's a safe bet that many of today's high flyers will end up in this category. The hundreds of millions of dollars that go to purchase the company's stock constitute money that otherwise could have supported productive investment. Instead, the money ends up

in the pockets of the company's founders, who will be able to enjoy a lavish lifestyle for many years to come. When this is repeated tens, or hundreds, of times, as it has been, it means that the stock market boom has diverted a vast pool of capital from productive uses to supporting the luxury consumption of Internet millionaires and billionaires. As a result of the stock market boom, the magnitude of this waste has been much greater than anything caused by crony capitalism in East Asia. The nation will pay an economic price for this diversion for some time.

In the wake of the crash, the whole relationship between the government and the market will have to be re-examined. New paths forward will be developed based on experimenting with new ideas and implementing old ones. But we should be sure that we never again trust the proselytizers of free-market capitalism at the Clinton Treasury, the Greenspan Federal Reserve Board and the IMF. These folks should be left in the dustbin of history, right alongside the central planners of the USSR. ■

Dean Baker, a senior research fellow at The Preamble Center, writes a weekly media commentary, *The Economic Reporting Review*, available online at [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org).



## Why the Stock Market Will Crash

All economists recognize that stock prices cannot continually rise disproportionate to corporate profits or earnings. This means that over a long enough period, stock prices will grow at the same rate as corporate profits. In other words, the ratio of the price of a share of stock to corporate earnings will stay the same.

The question then is what ratio of share prices to corporate profits makes sense? Historically, the ratio has averaged about 14.5 to 1. This means that a stock with earnings of \$1 per share would sell for \$14.50 per share. At present, the price to earnings ratio is close to 33 to 1. Obviously people who hold stock now think that the current ratio makes sense—but does it?

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects that corporate profits will grow at a real rate (adjusted for inflation) of just 0.6 percent annually over the next 10 years. The CBO may be underestimating profit growth somewhat, but no other profit projections are much different. Suppose profits grow 2 percent annually, considerably more rapidly than the CBO projects. Then, assuming that the price to earnings ratio stays constant, stock prices should also rise by 2 percent annually in real terms.

The increase in the share price is one component of the returns from holding stock. The other component is the dividend that companies often pay to shareholders. Historically, companies have paid out close to half their profits in dividends, using the rest to finance new investment. The current price to earnings ratio of 33 to 1 implies that corporate earnings are approximately 3 percent of the share price. If half of these earnings are being paid out as dividends, the dividend return for shareholders is 1.5 percent. (This includes some dividend payments that take the form of share repurchases.)

If shareholders get a 1.5 percent return through dividends, and a 2 percent return from an increase in the share price, then the total real return for a share of stock is 3.5 percent. Whether or not this is ade-

quate depends on the returns available from other assets. Currently a 30-year government bond pays a 4 percent real return. Since it is a good bet that the U.S. government will not go bankrupt, a government bond is a far safer asset to hold than shares of stock. People will not continue to hold stock for a 3.5 percent return, when they can get a 4 percent real return on government bonds. Historically, investors have demanded a premium of more than 4 percent to hold risky stocks instead of government bonds. If government bonds provided a 4 percent real return, investors would not hold stock unless it provided an 8 percent real return.

If the profit projections are correct, the only way for the rate of return on stock to rise is for its price to fall. If the price of a share of stock is \$100, and it pays out a \$1.50 dividend, this is a 1.5 percent rate of return. However, if the share price fell to \$50, and the stock still paid a \$1.50 dividend, then the dividend return would be 3 percent.

To restore the historic relationship between stock returns and bond returns, stock prices would have to fall by more than two-thirds from their current level. It is certainly plausible that stocks would fall by this amount. But it is also possible that people now view stocks as somewhat less risky than they did in the past, due to the growth of index funds and other changes in financial markets. But even to restore a limited premium to investing in stock rather than bonds, stock prices must fall by at least 50 percent. This would approximately double the dividend return to 3 percent. Together with the 2 percent real growth in share prices, this would provide a 5 percent real return, slightly higher than the 4 percent available on government bonds.

In short, for stocks to provide rates of return that compensate for risk, their price must fall by 50 to 75 percent. This conclusion rests on a range of profit projections that are widely accepted among economists and simple logic. No economist has been able to produce a plausible alternative scenario for the future of stock prices. **D.B.**



# PAST HIS PRIME

Alan Greenspan, be careful what you wish for

By G. Pascal Zachary  
NEW YORK

**A**lan Greenspan, hero of the financial class, wants to be reappointed as chairman of the Federal Reserve when his term expires next summer. He is likely to get it—at the possible cost of his reputation.

Greenspan isn't publicly asking for another term, which would be his fourth. But he privately has made it plain he wants another term—and what Greenspan wants, he gets.

Officially, President Clinton must nominate him for reappointment and the Senate must approve him. But these are formalities. In the nation's political firmament, Greenspan is a deity. His reputation is at its apex. As *The Economist* recently declared, Greenspan is "probably the most revered central banker of all time." He is widely credited for keeping inflation low and economic growth high. Investors hang on his every word and politicians heap praise on him.

Even if Clinton somehow soured on Greenspan and wanted a new Fed chairman, Republican control of the Senate virtually assures that any replacement he offered would not win approval. Says one close Fed watcher, "What other nominee can Clinton get through?" After his humiliation over the Senate's refusal to ratify the nuclear test-ban treaty, Clinton has even more reason to stick with a safe bet like Greenspan.

The inevitability of Greenspan's reappointment highlights the undemocratic character of the Federal Reserve, which handles the crucial task of setting interest rates. No one votes for Greenspan, and his Fed board is insulated from public pressure. Greenspan acts as if he transcends politics (though he began his tenure as a Republican). He has survived three presidents. Ronald Reagan first named him to the post in 1987. He was reappointed by George Bush and then by Clinton. While Democrats and Republicans come and go, Greenspan stays, a permanent feature of the Beltway.

**A** master technocrat, Greenspan's distance from the body politic is viewed as a big plus. He does make frequent appearances before Congress, but only occasionally talks plainly about how he makes his decisions. That his job could be handled differently—say, by showing concern over the widening disparity of wealth in the United States and the persistence of poverty—seems unthinkable. During his 12-year tenure, he has blocked or sabotaged every attempt to use the Fed's powers to promote equity and fairness, rather than fiscal rectitude and a market-friendly atmosphere. Early in the Clinton administration, he played a critical role in convincing the president that budget-busting and winning the hearts of Wall Street were more important than sponsoring costly new government programs.

Simply asking whether Greenspan should be subject to a term limit is dismissed as naïve. He embodies, after all, the booming American economy. "Democratic accountability doesn't mean you can't serve for a long time," says Geoffrey Miller, director of the Center for the Study of Central Banks at New York University. "If anyone has earned his job,



Greenspan has. It seems to me a no-brainer to reappoint him."

Virtually everyone in Congress, top economists and all the leading presidential candidates agree. Only one reform is even whispered about in Washington: pushing back by one year the schedule of appointing a Fed chairman so that a president could make the choice at the start of a new term rather than at the end. This at least would make the Fed appointment a campaign issue. As things stand, the next president is stuck with whomever Clinton picks.

There is little question of who that will be. The only silver lining in another Greenspan term is that volatile financial markets may finally get the better of the smug chairman. The odds of a downturn in the U.S. economy—accompanied by a sharp fall in stock prices—are growing. The longer Greenspan (who is 73) hangs around, the greater the chance that he will retire not in glory but in disgrace. "If Greenspan stays on, he won't have it so easy in the next round," says Robert Mundell, a Columbia University economist and this year's winner of the Nobel Prize in economics. "Because he'll have to figure out how to crawl on the ceiling" of a booming economy. His favored tool—raising and lowering of interest rates—"isn't going to be enough to stay up there and avoid a recession."

To be sure, Greenspan has proved adept at shifting interest rates to slow or expand the economy. When Greenspan took over as Fed chairman, he inherited an inflation-fighting agenda from his predecessor Paul Volcker. In 1990 and 1991, he was slow to lower interest rates, prolonging an economic downturn that some say cost Bush the

1992 election. In the mid-'90s, Greenspan raised rates in order to forestall a feared inflation rise, sparking criticism that he was unnecessarily destroying jobs. But in the past few years, while routinely pledging his vigilance against inflation, Greenspan has pushed rates far lower than many mainstream economists thought possible, while still avoiding higher inflation. His rate cuts, which led to lower borrowing costs for consumers and stimulated businesses to create jobs, even won praise from left-leaning economists. They credit him for standing up to more conservative economists, who wanted to raise rates at what turned out to be false signs of inflationary pressure.

Despite his success at seemingly striking a balance between higher economic growth and low inflation, Greenspan may have discovered the limits of micro-managing interest rates. He worries increasingly about the volatile U.S. stock market, where valuations—based on multiples of corporate profits—are well beyond historic levels. A steep drop in share prices seems possible despite the market rebound in the second half of October. Worth more than \$10 trillion, U.S. stocks represent about half of the value of the whole world's equity portfolio, so that a collapse in American values will surely rock investors the world over.

Though he stops short of saying so, Greenspan hints that he may lack the weapons to bring share values into a saner trading zone. "If we could find a way to prevent or deflate emerging bubbles, we would be better off," he recently said. "But identifying a bubble in the process of deflating may be among the most formidable challenges confronting a central bank."

How Greenspan can avoid declaring the market greatly overvalued is hard to understand since research by his own staff

economists strongly suggests that this is so. The 500 companies that comprise the Standard & Poors stock index spent a stunning \$144 billion in 1998 to purchase their own shares. Corporations traditionally buy their own stock when they think it is priced too low or when they want to improve their net profit per share. By reducing the number of shares outstanding, the per-share profit rises, thus creating a perception that the shares themselves should be worth more. The trouble with this tactic in a bull market: It's expensive. One Fed study of 144 companies found that they partly funded share buybacks by borrowing, which can't continue indefinitely. The study suggested that share prices could drop by a third if companies stopped buying their own shares.

Three years ago, Greenspan first sought to put investors in their place, saying they were inflected with "irrational exuberance." The term stuck, but the effect didn't. The market initially reacted to Greenspan's warning, then ignored him. When Greenspan made his comment, the Dow Jones average stood at 6,400. In March 1999, the Dow cracked the 10,000 level.

Greenspan seemed chastened by investor reaction to his warning, and in the intervening years adopted the so-called New Economy view, which holds that markets simply reflect the greater wealth-creating capacity of the United States. But in mid-October of this year, after the Dow average had fallen 12 percent from its all-time high over the prior six weeks, Greenspan once more raised the specter of overvalued stocks. Markets fell sharply in reaction.

Over the next two weeks, however, stocks rose, once more approaching record highs. In a speech in Florida on Oct. 28, Greenspan again blessed the U.S. economy, citing his belief that a significant upturn in productivity would continue to sustain the country's eight-year economic expansion. Greenspan's habit of engaging the market in a running dialogue may prove his undoing. "He makes a mistake by talking too much," Mundell says. "A central banker shouldn't worry about the stock market. He shouldn't try to talk it up or down."

The extraordinary growth in the U.S. economy may have contributed to an unrealistic belief that the Fed can protect markets against any shock, thus encouraging investors and businesses to take greater risks and raising the likelihood of a severe shock. Greenspan's two small interest-rate hikes this year—a third is expected in November—were shrugged off by investors, even though rate hikes usually dampen enthusiasm for stocks by reducing the premium earned from riskier investments. In retrospect, Greenspan might have raised rates more aggressively this year, clamping down harder on speculators. *The Economist* says that Greenspan "now seems to have decided that there is nothing he can do but cross his fingers and let the bubble burst by itself."

If this is so, Greenspan faces an endgame in which he can only await the verdict of those swept up by "irrational exuberance." Far from a master economist, Greenspan's ultimate flair is for manipulation of symbols. He long ago substituted image for reality in managing the vagaries of the world's richest national economy. When the cheering dies down and people assess Greenspan's legacy in the harsh light of history, they will recall that he never actually ran the U.S. economy. He never made any investments, created any products, launched any companies or met a payroll. These simple facts are the first casualty in the liturgy of those who worship Greenspan and the moneyed interests he so smoothly defends and preserves. ■

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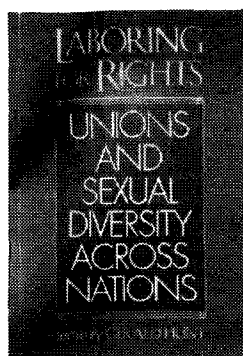
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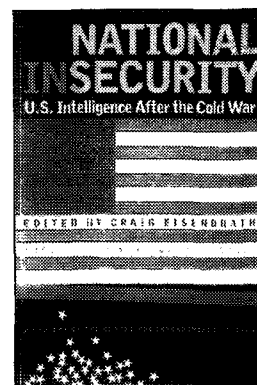
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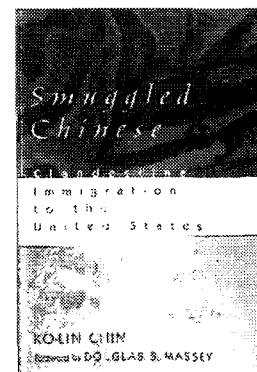
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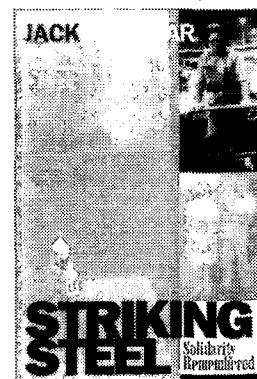
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# GETTING SCHOOLED

## STUDENTS ARE MAKING MANUFACTURERS SWEAT

BY DAVID MOBERG

Last spring, a wave of sit-in protests swept college campuses across the country. This fall, students seem more likely to be staging fashion—or strip—shows. But the change doesn't reflect an abandonment of politics. As students parade with—or take off—caps, T-shirts, sweatshirts or other apparel emblazoned with university logos and mascots, they are making the same point: Universities should stop licensing their image to companies that manufacture products under sweatshop conditions.

The student campaigns have emerged as the driving force behind a broader anti-sweatshop movement that steadily has been building during this decade. They have continued to spread this fall to campuses and regions that are not often centers of progressive student politics, such as Loyola University of New Orleans, scene of a recent sit-in. Nearly 150 campuses are loosely linked through the United Students Against Sweatshops, up from 100 last spring. While it relies on a nationwide core of several hundred leaders, the campus movement continues to resonate strongly with a broad swath of students.

All those clothes with big initials and appealing mascots could make a difference. Although a small fraction of the total apparel business, collegiate licensing is still big business—\$2.5 billion a year. Universities are vulnerable to student protests about profiting from exploitation and abuse of sweatshop workers. More important, because of their exclusive control over their names and images, universities can make tough demands on manufacturers. Ultimately, a student victory could have disproportionate influence on the global garment industry. Many contract factories make both university and other apparel. If conditions are improved and workers rights strengthened for college-licensed products, there is likely to be a spillover to other factory lines. Also, such success would demonstrate both to consumers in the United States and to sweatshop workers that companies can easily pay workers more and respect their rights at very little cost.

The student sweatshop movement also could have political consequences beyond the fight against rotten working conditions around the world. It is not only reviving student politics



on many campuses, but also leading to a link-up with workers, unions and workers rights advocates. It has bolstered support for campus organizing of both housekeepers and graduate student teaching assistants and provided new troops for off-campus labor struggles and community campaigns for a living wage. It also has encouraged a new anti-corporate focus to student politics, including critical campaigns against corporate globalization and the World Trade Organization.

Over the past decade, workers rights campaigners have won wide public awareness of worker abuse in the factories of subcontractors to the giants of the shoe and apparel business, who have fought and fled both unionization and governmental regulation. Without meaningful global enforcement of workers rights, it has been primarily the threat of bad publicity—which hurts the corporate image that is key to higher profits—that has forced modest concessions.

Students are particularly effective because companies are especially concerned about the youth market. Reebok, for example, after releasing a study revealing worker abuses—and some plant improvements—at Indonesian shoe subcontractors, recently announced: “As concern for human rights issues grows among consumers, particularly younger consumers, we believe our leadership and reputation will translate into greater preference for our brands and products.”

While Nike and others still resist fundamental changes that would let workers organize or raise wages significantly, student pressure has won important concessions. Last spring, for example, Nike—like other companies—adamantly insisted that it could not provide the names and



locations of its contractors since those were vital trade secrets. In October, however, Nike released the locations of 42 of its factories (out of a worldwide network of 365) that produce apparel for five universities where students had persuaded the administration to ask for disclosure. "Nike blew a huge hole in the employer argument that the name and locations of plants are trade secrets," says Alan Howard, assistant to the president of UNITE, the needletrades union. "Now no system can call itself legitimate and not release this information."

Although there had been earlier campaigns against Nike and other companies that struck lucrative deals with university athletic departments to promote products, the campus awakening took off in the spring of 1997 among Duke University students, some of whom had spent the previous summer as union interns. They persuaded the university to adopt a code of conduct and to insist on full disclosure of where products were manufactured. But negotiations between universities and the Collegiate Licensing Company over the following summer excluded students and produced a weaker code. Last January, Duke students held a sit-in protest to restore full disclosure. Other sit-ins followed, with students at the University of Wisconsin upping the ante, by winning a commitment to protect the rights of women workers and to pay a living wage.

In March, a group of universities—now expanded to 125—responded to the protests by joining the Fair Labor Association, a controversial product of several years of negotiation among corporations, nonprofit groups and unions. When the FLA was formed in 1997, labor and religious groups dropped out, and students criticized the group for being too heavily influenced by business and providing inadequate monitoring of an already weak code of conduct.

The issue of monitoring codes of conduct has spurred heated debates about who should do it, how it can be done effectively or even whether such privatized systems could displace unions and government regulation, historically the two most effective means of fighting sweatshops. The FLA aims to accredit businesses or nonprofit groups that can monitor compliance with its code at a sample of each member's supplier factories, with the prospect of certifying the entire company as compliant after three years. Other systems in the United States and Europe often focus on monitoring only individual factories. Although multinational auditing firms will likely dominate the monitoring business, the International Labor Rights Fund—an FLA member—wants greater reliance on local human rights groups, such as the Guatemalan consortium Coverco, which just released a critical review of a Liz Claiborne supplier.

The students' own Worker Rights Consortium is based on the toughest code of conduct among the contenders and a different model of enforcement—verification rather than monitoring. The WRC would demand that collegiate licensees monitor their own suppliers and fully disclose their findings. The WRC would then rely on spot checks, probably conducted by local non-governmental organizations—like Coverco—to verify company claims. If the companies failed to live up to their agreement, they would lose their university contract.

The WRC is "an interesting initiative that supplements what I think the FLA is trying to do," says Michael Posner, director of the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, an FLA member. "It's not mutually exclusive, but it doesn't have the scope or resources" of the FLA. Posner sees no problem in schools belonging to both organizations and acknowledges that the student pressure might strengthen the FLA. So far, only Brown University has joined the WRC, though it remains in the FLA as well.

But the USAS, which turned down an invitation to be one of the noncorporate members of the FLA, insists that universities must choose. The FLA implicates universities in certifying a company as "sweat-free" and permits corporations to keep much of the results private, while the WRC "is about opening up the industry," argues Marion Traub-Werner, a stu-

## **BECAUSE OF THEIR EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OVER THEIR NAMES AND IMAGES, UNIVERSITIES CAN MAKE TOUGH DEMANDS ON MANUFACTURERS.**

dent leader at the University of North Carolina. Eric Brakken, USAS national organizer, adds that the student code and verification system better reflects the needs of workers.

The FLA represents a compromise with corporations that universities do not have to make—reflecting the limits of the sweatshop movement when the association was formed. But the licensing authority gives universities unusual bargaining power. "The leverage we have with the student campaign is different from that of any other group," Brakken says. "We don't have to compromise."

Some in the sweatshop movement worry it could lose its mass appeal by becoming bogged down in technical details or consumed by its conflict with the FLA. As campus organizing builds this fall, it seems likely that there will be a renewed wave of demonstrations demanding support for the WRC and for full disclosure of information about contractors. The difficult issue of a living wage is likely to emerge as an important focus of protests as well. Some strategists argue for more campaigns directed at targets like Gap, Nike and Wal-Mart. Others recommend more focus on direct support for sweatshop workers who are trying to organize. Medea Benjamin of Global Exchange wants to see more exposés, based on student research of sweatshop conditions. "It's important for students to get to the producing areas and talk to people," says Jeff Ballinger, who initiated the decade-old campaign against Nike. "That will scare the bejesus out of companies and administrators, when they hook up with unions and workers rights groups."

At this point, what matters more than the technical details of any plan is the ability of the movement to generate widespread public outrage. That will ultimately require the labor movement, church groups and women's organizations—all historically key actors against sweatshops—to take up the campaign more widely and aggressively, spreading the word to mainstream America. Until then, the biggest American threat to global sweatshops comes from the movement of students, who are, Ballinger says, "the only ones you can't lie to and expect that they'll take it lying down." ■

# Mumia's Last Chance

By Salim Muwakkil

When Mumia Abu-Jamal was granted a stay of execution on Oct. 25 by a federal district judge, it lit a spark of optimism among his supporters that he finally may get a fair hearing on his 1982 first-degree murder conviction for killing Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner. While celebrations of the stay may once have been limited to gatherings of mostly white leftists, support for Abu-Jamal now also comes from a wide range of black Americans.

Federal Judge William H. Yohn Jr. delayed Abu-Jamal's Dec. 2 execution date to review the lengthy *habeas corpus* petition filed by his attorneys. The document presents a compelling argument that Abu-Jamal's trial was deeply flawed. And since federal courts traditionally have been more sympathetic to appeals from Death Row inmates, it's likely his case will be more thoroughly reviewed than it was in the Pennsylvania state courts under the despotic supervision of Judge Albert F. Sabo.

In the *habeas corpus* petition, Jamal's attorneys contend that the state court record is so fraught with constitutional error, it's clear their client never had a meaningful trial. His lawyers claim that law enforcement authorities fabricated and suppressed evidence; that the prosecution invoked improper argumentation (including explicit use of Abu-Jamal's past political views and activities); and that some jurors deliberated during the course of the trial proceedings. Abu-Jamal's lawyers say Judge Sabo exhibited virtually no concern for fairness and exercised his discretion in every meaningful respect against the interests of their client, even to the point of thwarting his feeble efforts to present exceedingly vital evidence to the jury. Abu-Jamal, who represented himself, was illegitimately stripped of his *pro se* rights and banished unjustifiably from approximately half of the trial proceedings. The full petition elaborates these and other charges, meticulously listing events that present an extremely convincing case that Abu-Jamal deserves a new trial.

For many, the evidence used to convict Abu-Jamal seems overwhelming. Witnesses testified they saw a man in dread-

locks like Abu-Jamal's shoot Faulkner. Police found Abu-Jamal at the scene wounded once by a round fired from Faulkner's gun. The dead officer was shot several times with a .38-caliber pistol registered to Abu-Jamal, which was found at the scene with five spent shell casings. Add to that the supposed confession Abu-Jamal made at the hospital, and the case appears to be one of clear guilt.

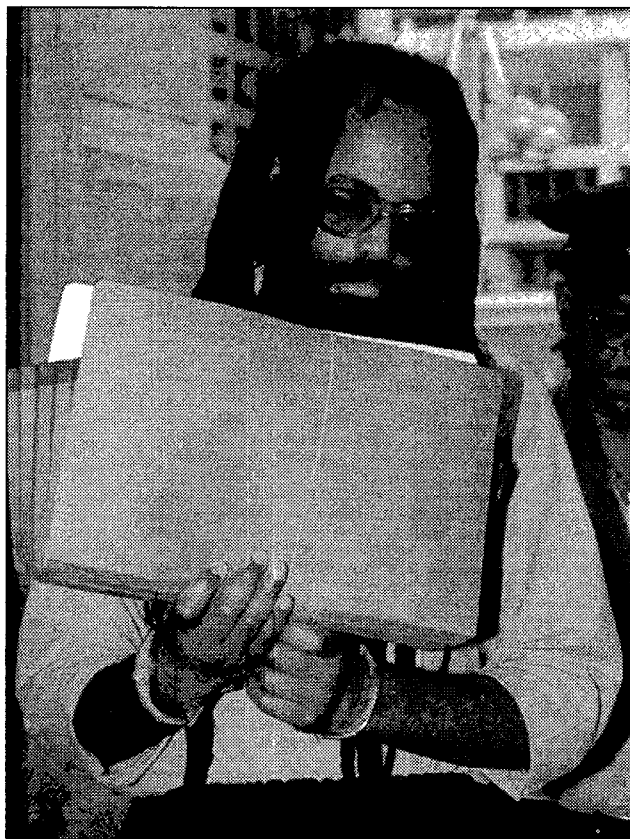
But subsequent investigations have raised questions about much of this evidence. For example, the witnesses who claimed to have identified Abu-Jamal all had differing stories prior to the trial and openly altered their accounts as time went on to conform to the prosecution's version of events. Other witnesses even identified different men at the scene.

"Within minutes of the shooting, four witnesses—each unknown to the others—independently reported to police that a black male had fled the scene," the petition reads. This evidence was never introduced at Abu-Jamal's trial. The petition also reveals that the drivers license application of another man was in Faulkner's possession when he died. This evidence was only recently discovered because it had been suppressed by the prosecution.

Despite these questions, the black community has been generally reluctant to embrace Abu-Jamal's cause. Like most others, those black Americans who had heard of the case were persuaded that the right person was convicted. But African-Americans distanced themselves from the hub-

bub surrounding Abu-Jamal for other reasons as well.

Although the initial push to gain visibility for Abu-Jamal was put in motion by MOVE, a black nationalist group that he often covered as a journalist in Philadelphia, it was a white Trotskyite group, the Partisan Defense Committee, that most diligently worked to publicize his case. The Revolutionary



Mumia Abu-Jamal

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# Anniversary Greetings

**This issue actually marks two anniversaries.**

Late in 1976, James Weinstein and a handful of other leftists started a publication "to identify and clarify the struggles against corporate power now multiplying in American society." Jim and his colleagues dedicated their reporting and analysis to the project of turning disparate and diffuse progressive impulses throughout the country into a "coherent political force." Twenty-three years later, although Jim did not expect to be quite so patient about rejuvenating an effective left in the United States, those of us now responsible for getting the magazine into readers' hands are proud to continue this project.

We also are pleased to celebrate the first anniversary of the Appeal to Reason campaign. Inspired by the *Appeal To Reason* newspaper founded in 1885 in Girard, Kan., this campaign supports our efforts to dramatically broaden the reach and impact of *In These Times*. The *Appeal's* circulation peaked with 750,000 subscribers. We believe that *In These Times* can play an analogous role at the turn of a new century and, over the last year, we have turned to you for help.

The centerpiece of our circulation-building strategy is direct mail. Thanks to extra contributions from readers and friends, we will have mailed nearly 300,000 introductory subscription offers by the end of the year. With your continued support, we hope to double our mailings in 2000 and 2001, boosting our circulation by more than 10,000 readers in the process.

Over the next year, we also want to involve our community of readers and supporters in building our circulation in more personal ways: discounts for multiple gift subscriptions, house meetings, local reader groups and other experiments. Each of these approaches grew out of a reader's suggestion or inquiry. (To learn more about these plans, become an *In These Times* donor and watch for our first newsletter of 2000.)

The most important lesson of both anniversaries is that this magazine exists because so many of its readers consider it worth an extra measure of time, money and thought. Again and again over the years, you have made it clear to us that you value the education, disputation and conversation that go on in these pages.

Beth Schulman, publisher

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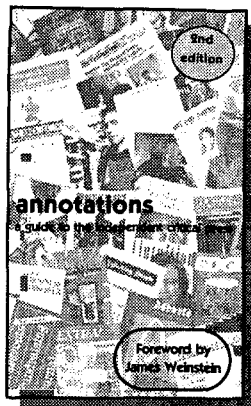
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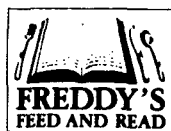
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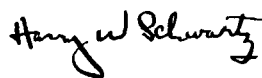
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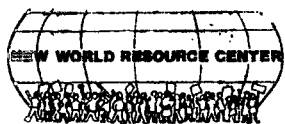
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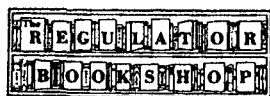
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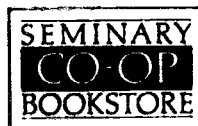


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# No Exit

By Philip Connors

*Do not think that he who seeks to comfort you lives untroubled among the simple and quiet words that sometimes do you good. His life has much difficulty and sadness and remains far behind yours. Were it otherwise, he would never have been able to find those words.*

Rainier Maria Rilke,  
*Letters to a Young Poet*

I thought of Rilke as I read Kay Redfield Jamison's new book, *Night Falls Fast*, one of three intriguing books about suicide published recently. Jamison does not offer comfort in the traditional sense of the word: an easing of misery or pain.

## Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide

By Kay Redfield Jamison  
Knopf  
320 pages, \$26

## History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture

By Georges Minois  
Johns Hopkins University Press  
387 pages, \$35.95

## Suicide and Attempted Suicide: Methods and Consequences

By Geo Stone  
Carrol & Graf  
480 pages, \$27.95

Rather, through anger, sensitivity and intellectual rigor, she offers the company of a restless and tested soul—a woman who has gazed into the abyss and returned with a poignant report.

I was drawn to this book because, as Camus might have said, I was looking for lucidity in the face of the absurd. That is because a suicide cleaved my life in two. There is the time before my brother placed a rifle barrel to his head, and there is the time after. On the day of his death my very being calved like an iceberg.

This internal dichotomy often makes me wonder just who, precisely, I am. I remember the 5-year-old version of myself, a boy so terrified of death that he faked an illness to escape his grandfather's funeral. Nearer and more

disconcerting is the 24-year-old me, a young man so stricken with grief over his brother's self-destruction that he became enamored of oblivion, standing on bridges for hours, interspersing visions of his own fall to death with a recurring image of his brother's brain matter spattered on the wall.

Ultimately I realized, through the very suffering my brother's death inflicted upon me, that suicide is an answer only for the one who successfully executes his departure. For those left behind there are no answers—only a set of endlessly repeating questions and a great silent void into which they fall. Like most witnesses to the aftermath of suicide, I choose to remain alive in a world of eternal contradiction. I am both the young boy afraid of death and the young man intimate with its seduction. And despite the best efforts of reason, I sometimes see my early life as one long opportunity to prevent a tragedy I could not see coming, and my life since that tragedy as an effort to live with the gnawing guilt of my failure.

**N**ight Falls Fast is a small antidote to that sense of failure. There is no easy way to describe this book. Part sociology, part reportage, part scientific synthesis, with fragments of memoir as bookends, Jamison—best known for her account of depression, *An Unquiet Mind*—has produced an extremely accessible and comprehensive study of suicide. She uses statistics judiciously, displays deftness with literary reference, and tells individual stories of suicide with grace and subtlety. "I studied everything I could about my disease and read all I could find about the psychological and biological determinants of suicide," Jamison writes. "As a tiger tamer learns about the minds and moves of his cats, and a pilot about the dynamics of wind and air, I learned about the illness I had and its possible end point. I learned as best I could, and as much as I could, about the moods of death."

The result is eclectic. Jamison explores suicide notes, methods, differing cultural reactions and compelling individual cases. She briefly tours the history of societal reaction to self-murder. She touches on suicide contagion, suicide's depiction in the media and reaction within families. And she spends the greatest part of her book situating suicide

within a web of psychiatric, biological and environmental causes, deploying scientific research to show that more than 90 percent of suicides involve people with a mental illness.

The appearance of this book could not have been more timely. Surgeon General David Satcher has vowed to make suicide prevention a public health priority, and none too soon. While government statistics show the number of homicides has dropped significantly over the past several years, suicide rates have remained constant. In 1997, the last year for which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has statistics, 30,535 Americans killed themselves, making suicide the eighth-leading cause of death. In 1998, the Justice Department reports, less than 17,000 people were murdered. For all the public outrage over gun homicides, 4,000 more people killed themselves with guns in 1997 than were killed with guns by others.

Jamison argues that despite these bracing statistics, suicide remains a deeply taboo subject because of religious prohibitions, the stigma of psychiatric illness and a sense of unspeakable horror at a force of destruction that arises not from without but within. To put it more bluntly, a facile, materialist culture in thrall to self-gratification and self-improvement is simply not equipped to wrestle with the implications of suicide.

**A facile, materialist culture in thrall to self-gratification and self-improvement is not equipped to deal with the implications of suicide.**

Jamison offers the case of explorer Meriwether Lewis as an example. A few scholars, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, still insist that Lewis did not commit suicide but was murdered. They claim the verdict of suicide is a "conspiracy" that marks Lewis, an almost universally revered American hero, with the stain of dishonor. It is inconceivable to them that a man of great physical





strength and courage could possibly have succumbed to the demons of depression. "Suicide is not a blot on anyone's name," Jamison writes. "It is a tragedy."

A great deal of the value of this book lies in her ability to apportion collective blame for that tragedy. Obliquely, Jamison notes that the failure of our mental health system and our lax gun control laws are together culpable in a majority of suicides—suicides that can and ought to be prevented. Tough, meaningful restrictions on handgun purchases would save countless lives each year. A recent California study demonstrated that in the week after purchasing a handgun, the gun's owner is 50 times more susceptible to suicide than the average person. This rather grim statistic was given a human face recently when the mother of a girl wounded in the Columbine High School shootings walked into a gun shop, asked to see a handgun, loaded it and killed herself on the spot.

Jamison also casts a grim eye on health insurance companies for squeezing mental health benefits in the managed-care era. And she has a message for those "compassionate conservatives" who trumpet private charity and community goodwill as the answers to all social problems. The 1963 Community Mental

Jamison does not offer sweeping policy solutions. Nor does she explore the philosophical merits of suicide. She is careful to leave us with a sense of the act's enduring riddle, noting that "more than half of suicide attempts occur within the context of a premeditation period of less than five minutes."

**B**ut for those inclined to approach the subject theoretically, Georges Minois' *History of Suicide* is a place to start. Exhaustive and at times repetitive, it has a peculiar disembodied quality—history minus the hand of a forceful historian. Minois offers instead a kind of encyclopedia of moral, social, religious and cultural attitudes toward suicide, from ancient Greece to the Enlightenment. The book's chief shortcoming is Minois' ceaselessly democratic impulse to include the scribbling of every Western European who ever addressed the topic of suicide in a letter, journal or carving on a prison wall.

Nevertheless, this method allows him to show the extent to which suicide was abhorred and discouraged through much of the Middle Ages. Roman authorities and the Catholic Church codified a condemnation of suicide because it was an individual revolt against authority—the

Health Centers Act was meant to encourage just that, she notes, as new anti-psychotic and anti-depressant drugs made it possible for patients to leave big mental institutions. But, as she shows, the outside world proved unable—or unwilling—to manage the responsibility. "We have released the severely mentally ill onto our streets, and they have come to make up a third to a half of our country's homeless," she writes. "They make us uncomfortable, but not so uncomfortable that we protect or house, insure or tend or heal them."

authority of the state over its subjects, of landowners over their slaves, of a God who alone had the power to give and take life. Minois writes, "The particularly tragic nature of suicide, which seemed to force the hand of fate and nature, engendered worries about the cadaver, which, if it were possessed by evil spirits, might return to harass the living."

The authorities spared no method to make certain that did not happen. Often the right hand of a suicide was cut off to ensure he would not return and commit crimes with it. In many cities, the bodies of suicides were dragged through the streets until they disintegrated. Others were crucified and left on the cross until birds had picked the cadaver clean. Perhaps the most preferred method was burial of the corpse at a crossroads, where a stake was driven through its heart. The combination of the stake and constant traffic was thought to ensure the spirit of the dead would stay underfoot instead of wandering mischievously among the living.

Minois then pinpoints the turn away from these ghastly practices. More than anyone else, Gutenberg deserves credit. The printing press allowed books to circulate beyond the tight circle of clergy who had clung to the power of their exclusive literacy for hundreds of years. Suddenly, a wider group of scholars gained access to the works of classical antiquity, in which Seneca, Cato, Socrates and assorted Epicureans and Stoics wrestled with the concepts of individual agency, personal suffering and suicide. By 1610, nearly 200 suicides a year were depicted on the stages of London's theaters. It was the time of Shakespeare, and a new candor ruled.

**B**ut while Shakespeare's candor plumbed the human soul in all its complexity, candor in our own age frequently aims to outrage or titillate. Case in point: Geo Stone's *Suicide and Attempted Suicide*.

Stone has written what amounts to a suicide handbook, an immensely detailed how-to: "The material here is intended both for those who want a quick and relatively painless death, and for those who want to carry out a suicidal gesture as safely and noninjuriously [sic] as possible." Unfortunately, Stone only briefly sketches a rationale

for his project, a few vague words about self-determination and the alleviation of suffering.

Stone clearly intends for his book to reach an audience of rational adults. Yet, as Jamison shows, most victims of suicide suffer from depression, manic depression, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses; what's more, the decision to end one's life does not generally occur after a month of study followed by sane and sober deliberation.

Stone's perspective is libertarian in the extreme. As a guide to methods and consequences, as the book's subtitle states, it is unparalleled. He riffs on the difference between drowning in saltwater and freshwater. He cautions against electrocuting oneself in a manner that would leave the corpse with a live charge. He is unrelentingly blunt: "If you intend to hang yourself, the next major decision is whether to

do a drop (judicial-type) or suspension job." He is also glib and sarcastic, traits at odds with the seriousness of his purpose: "We have progressed far beyond ... barbarism, and no longer condemn failed suicides. Now, for example, if a Death Row criminal attempts suicide, every effort is made to save him (or, more rarely, her) so that a civilized, state-approved execution can be carried out."

Someone in a temporarily fragile state of mind is unlikely to appreciate his ironic tone, but that is the least of this book's faults. It is best suited to seekers of the morbid, lovers of the macabre and writers of fiction seeking verisimilitude in their work. In the hands of the those for whom it is expressly intended, it is a bomb. We would do well to offer them comfort instead. ■

*Philip Connors is a writer in New York.*

flattered and courted the ambitious young Hitler, single-handedly stifled Germany's Catholic Center Party (the one political organization that might have resisted Hitler's rise to power), and persuaded Hitler to sign a concordat with the Vatican that imposed "a moral duty on Catholics to obey their Nazi rulers." As pope, Pacelli sat back, failing to lift a finger of protest as the Führer's minions carried out the "Final Solution." Cornwell does not suggest the pope should have been prosecuted as a war criminal, but readers may be tempted to think along those lines by the end of the book.

Mentioned but passed over quickly are those occasions when the pope does not conform to Cornwell's image of Pacelli's pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic persona. The pope's strong words at the beginning of the war in 1939 that "atrocities against noncombatants, refugees, old people, women and children ... cry out for the vengeance of God" are ignored. His broadcast to the world in 1942 condemning the extinction "of those hundreds of thousands who, without any fault of their own, sometimes only by reason of their race, are marked down for death," is dismissed by Cornwell as "paltry." The Vatican's considerable efforts to assist in emigrating Jews from Europe are considered a drop in the bucket.

Oddest of all is the author's interpretation of the well-documented role played by Pius XII in a plot to depose Hitler in

# Tunnel Visions

By Robert McClory

In the surprisingly popular motion picture *The Sixth Sense*, the little boy who is visited by ghosts tells his adult friend, "They see only what they want to see." These apparitions, besides being dead, are afflicted with acute tunnel vision, which further distances

His original hope, he assures the reader, was to vindicate Pope Pius XII of longstanding charges that he was culpable in the Holocaust. Cornwell was provided access to never-before-reviewed documents dealing with the pope's life and activities. But after poring over the material, Cornwell says he found himself in a state of "moral shock." Far from amounting to an exoneration, the material produced a further, more serious indictment. *Hitler's Pope* is the result of this research.

While this book does indeed indict the pope, it provides little concerning his role in the Holocaust that was not already known. At the same time, the spin Cornwell puts on all this tends to contradict his claim to even-handed, objective scholarship. Virtually everything Pius XII did, said or thought about is skewed to portray him as a Machiavellian schemer, a moral coward and a pompous hypocrite. Even the most neutral reader would be hard pressed to stifle the suspicion that Cornwell doth protest too much.

In Cornwell's scenario, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII,

them from the mortal world. I could not help thinking of that affliction when I read *Hitler's Pope*, the much discussed and quite controversial book purporting to uncover the "secret history" of Pope Pius XII. It can be seen not only in the pope's own obtuse tunnel vision, but in that of the author, John Cornwell. On certain sensitive subjects, we all have a tendency to see only what we want to see.

First of all, consider Cornwell, an English writer of some repute and with "unparalleled" contacts in the Vatican.

## Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII

By John Cornwell

Viking

430 pages, \$29.95

**Pope Pius XII was kept apprised of what was happening to the Jews. Why then did he remain so mute?**

1939 and 1940, when the Führer's intentions became perfectly clear. The pope was approached secretly by a group of anti-Nazi German generals and he agreed to function as go-between for them and the Allied forces. If successful, the coup would have ousted Hitler, returned Germany to democratic government and ended the war. The plot thickened for some five months and ultimately failed only because of a lack of



From age 25 on, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, breathed only the rarefied air of Vatican politics.

may indicate a momentary awakening from the trance. But when it didn't work, he fell back on the two prevailing items on his agenda: fostering and protecting the Vatican-centered church and opposing Communism.

Why didn't Pius XII do more to help the Jews? Why did he remain so mute even as the Jews of Rome were being hauled away, almost past his window, on their trip to the death camps? He was kept apprised of the situation, as Cornwell shows in detail, but he said nothing when the horror reached his doorstep. The evidence says that he feared a scream of outrage, or even a less dramatic protest, would do more harm than good; it would bring down vengeance against himself, the Vatican, Catholics all over Europe and increased persecution (if such was possible) of the Jews. And even if it prompted an uprising against the German occupation forces in some places, that would only help the Communists. So he reasoned. I do not think he loathed the Jews, as Cornwell keeps insinuating. Sad as it is to say, he didn't see them.

Recent speculation has it that the present pope, John Paul II, would very much like to announce the beatification of Pius XII as a kind of millennium tribute. This would leave Pius XII but one small step away from being proclaimed a saint and assure his eventual canonization. Ironically, John Paul II can on his own authority speed up the process of sainthood because of the supreme power he holds in the church—thanks in no small way to the centralizing contributions of the man he would elevate. That John Paul II would take such action may appear incomprehensible since it would surely undermine the improved Jewish-Catholic relations the pope has worked so hard to solidify. Yet it could happen. John Paul II has also shown himself as one who sees what he wants to see. ■

**Robert McClory**, an associate professor of journalism at Northwestern University, is the author of *Power and the Papacy: The People and Politics Behind the Doctrine of Infallibility*.

trust between the British and the German plotters, not because of any hesitancy on the part of Pius XII to take part in so dangerous a conspiracy. If the negotiations had been discovered by Hitler, the pope certainly would have been a hunted (if not dead) man, and terrible retaliation would likely have been visited on the Vatican and Catholics throughout Europe. Pius XII's role in this has been called by some historians one of the most astounding events in the modern history of the papacy. This is surely not what one would expect of "Hitler's Pope."

**N**evertheless, *Hitler's Pope* has more than enough documentation to provide insight into Pius XII's personal tunnel vision. From age 25 on, Pacelli breathed only the rarefied atmosphere of Vatican politics. His take on world events was dictated entirely by the needs of the Catholic Church as his superiors and advisers saw them.

First, a determined effort was underway to transfer the worldwide, day-to-day government of the church entirely into the hands of the pope and the Roman curia. This move had been gathering momentum ever since the First Vatican Council in 1870, but in many areas of the world bishops and Catholic lay organizations (like Germany's Center Party) still operated with considerable autonomy. In some countries,

priests and lay Catholics selected their own bishops. (In the United States, for example, the first Catholic bishop was elected by the clergy.)

Pacelli was the Vatican's competent and willing instrument for ending such independence in favor of a more controlled, tidy, efficient bundling of all authority under a single leader. His role in creating the new Code of Canon Law in 1917, his establishing a concordat between the Vatican and the German government in 1933 (which effectively rendered the German bishops impotent), even his tragic silence in the later stages of the war—all flowed from a basic passion to keep the church operating smoothly above the fray of worldly events, safe from the vicissitudes of history, secure against its manifold enemies.

Secondly, there was an overwhelming fear within Vatican circles that everything would come apart if Communism should prevail or continue to gain momentum. Here was an atheistic system opposed to everything the Vatican stood for and so offensive that any form of government, including Germany's dictatorship and Italy's fascism, seemed preferable. It is entirely possible that Pius XII hardly even realized what Hitler stood for until the war started. All his life he had been seeing only what he wanted to see. His subsequent involvement in the aborted coup against Hitler



# Smoke in Your Eyes

By Joshua Rothkopf

**T**he *Insider*, a grandly voluptuous conspiracy movie about tobacco companies and a news network that balked, shivers with its own amped sense of urgency. The director, Michael Mann, has spent the better part of the past 20 years shooting cool-blue hazes and

**The Insider**  
Directed by Michael Mann

tail-lights glinting off slicked streets—his best-known work is still the TV series *Miami Vice*. But suddenly, Mann has discovered human beings and boardroom politics and the vagaries of behavior—in short, the real world. It's a shocking discovery for him, one that serves to energize his cynical subject more than even his pumped-up style. The result is a galvanizing indictment of a film, worthier than I ever could have expected from Mann, much less the generally innocuous distributor, Disney.

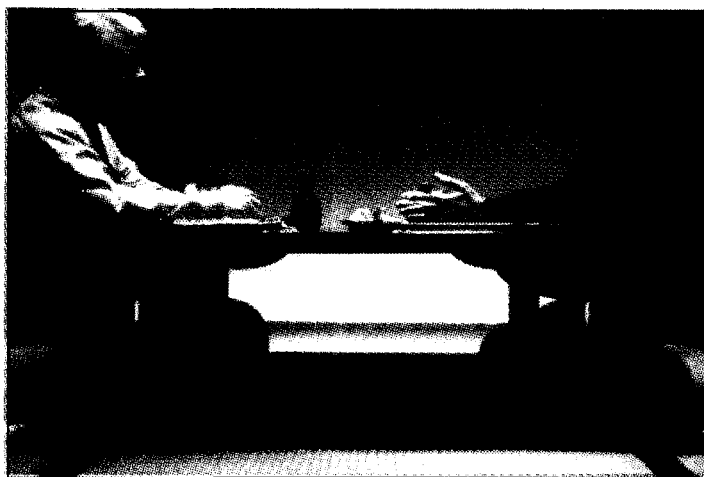
The material, co-scripted by Mann and Eric Roth, derives from several years of headlines and a long piece of reportage from *Vanity Fair* elegantly distilled into a tough, sprawling screenplay that still can't help but simplify.

Neatness can be forgiven in light of the devastating irony teased out: a whistleblower musters courage to fight his corporation, only to suffer the ultimate death blow from another corporation trying to help him.

Jeffrey Wigand is an executive for Brown & Williamson Tobacco in the early '90s, doing ethically questionable scientific research to enhance the impact of nicotine. He does it for the money, but his job requires blinders that he can't seem to don; he becomes something of a pill. When he sulks home to his suburban comfort zone after being fired one day, he sits as long as he can through dinner before telling his coddled wife. (She immediately panics about the car payments.)

Soon, Wigand's dismissal ripens into wounded pride—they force him into an expanded confidentiality agreement by threatening his severance package—and it's not long before he's ready to make some statements. (Russell Crowe is marvelous in the tricky role, modulating subtly from entitlement to a growing sense of outrage and anxiety.)

**T**he call to integrity comes in the person of Lowell Bergman (Al Pacino), a veteran producer for *60 Minutes* and one-time radical journalist, whom we first see playing hardball with militant Islamic fundamentalists negotiating for a Mike Wallace interview. Even behind a blindfold, Bergman is fearless and super-cool: He gets his way with the



Russell Crowe lets Al Pacino in on Big Tobacco's dirty secrets.

Hezbollah and, with the whisk of a curtain opening to the Lebanese skyline, tells his cell phone, "We're on."

The voice is rough—he has fought the hard fights—and Mann has a perfect piece of casting in Pacino, who lends his portrayal a slew of Watergate-era credentials: "I still do the tough stories," Bergman explains (in case we forgot *Serpico*). "CBS reaches a lot of people."

Airing Wigand's information is just the kind of greater good Bergman needs to rationalize his job in the mainstream, just as he in turn comes to symbolize public exoneration and reclaimed dignity for his increasingly embattled source.

Both are grasping for some kind of personal honor, and when Mann gives them a private moment about halfway through the film, smiling in the moonlight with drinks in hand after Wigand's courageous deposition in court, they both look like grateful survivors of a war.

But only Wigand has suffered personally—a harrowing fallout of litigation, death threats and divorce—so it's to the film's credit that these comparisons are made early on; Bergman's own fall after an unexpected betrayal comes with the grandeur of tragedy. Enter CBS corporate interests and the ominous phrase "tortious interference"—a bit of legalese for mind your own business. Fearing a countersuit that could jeopardize its impending sale to Westinghouse for billions, CBS infamously killed Wigand's interview and sabotaged its own news jewel. (It wouldn't have hurt the film to hint at the network's unwillingness to air a segment that might have put its chair-

man's son, Andrew Tisch, in jail; he was head of a major tobacco company himself.) So Bergman, like Wigand, becomes a victim to hidden stakes, his time-earned credibility shattered by his parent company.

*The Insider* never really rebounds from the shame of that ultimate abuse; it's not supposed to. Up to then, Mann builds suspense with the grammar of investigative daring and you thrill to his technique. A tense scene at a golf range—Wigand is trailed by corporate spies—is, on its

own, a minor triumph of editing, punctuated by the violent sounds of strokes and over-the-shoulder glances. Even a furious exchange of faxes has a paranoid vigor to it. Although Bergman finally prevails, it's no happy ending—too many reputations are bruised. (Christopher Plummer is shrewd and slippery as Mike Wallace, more concerned with protecting his legacy than taking a stand and "wandering in the wilderness of National Public Radio.") Media scandals may be old news to jaded TV viewers who tune in anyhow, but Mann's picture is bracing—it leaves you feeling vigilant. It's the best show going. ■

FRANK CONNOR/TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

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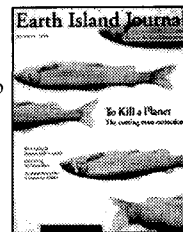
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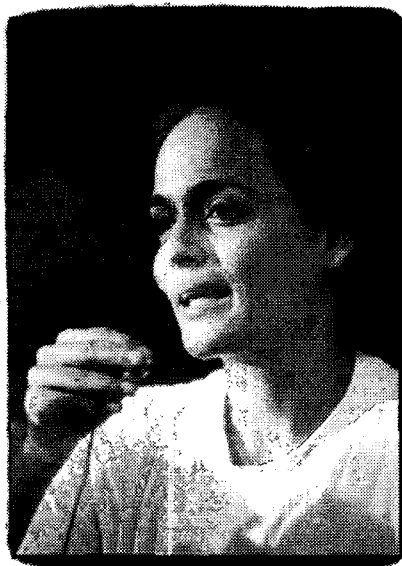
Continued on page 46

herself from India's city elite (of which she admits she is very much a part), whose "eyes glaze over" when talk turns to the injustices of the controversial Sardar Sarovar dam project. Her essay on the subject is a painstakingly detailed and impassioned account of the economic impetus behind the dam and its environmental and social effects. Roy contextualizes the project in the wider history of India's massive dam building—with its attendant "Iron Triangle" of "compromising politicians, bureaucrats, dam-construction companies," environmental "racketeers" and "friendly neighborhood World Bank officials"—but as you can tell from her language, she has no interest in sympathizing with their motives. They are guilty as judged by nature and the largely silenced population she represents.

Unless you are a World Bank official or have a stake in the international dam construction industry, it is almost impossible not to be persuaded by Roy's argument that big dams in India or China or anywhere else are destructive, inhumane projects. In piercingly poetic sentences, Roy recounts how India's 3,600 dams have drowned thousands of villages, uprooted millions of people and caused irreversible environmental damage, while the government has stood by, keeping no record of the displacement and offering almost nothing in the way of rehabilitation. She writes:

The millions of displaced people don't exist anymore. When history is rewritten they won't be in it. Not even as statistics. Some of them have subsequently been displaced three or four times—a dam, an artillery proof range, another dam, a uranium mine, a power project. Once they start rolling there's no resting place. The great majority is eventually absorbed into slums on the periphery of our great cities, where it coalesces into an immense pool of cheap construction labor (that builds more projects that displace more people). True, they're not being annihilated or taken to gas chambers, but I can warrant that the quality of their accommodation is worse than in any concentration camp of the Third Reich. They're not captive, but they redefine the meaning of liberty.

**H**er second essay, "The End of Imagination," on India's newly achieved nuclear capacity, ranges from the reactions to and rationales for India's bomb to wider questions of power, democracy and the social good. Roy mocks the theory of deterrence as a foreign policy concept that is fundamentally at odds with human nature. She refuses to abide by the idea that the devastation a nuclear war would bring deters war and secures peace: "It is not some inherent, mystical attribute of nuclear bombs that they automatically inspire thoughts of peace." Unequivocally and with unfailing polemical ire, Roy calls India's creation of a nuclear bomb "the final act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its people." For her, the nuclear bomb is "the most anti-democratic, anti-national, anti-human, out-



SAVITA KIROSKAR/REUTERS

Photos: (Left) Roy addresses a press conference in Indore in July. She expressed solidarity with activists opposing the building of 3,000 dams on the Narmada River. (Back page) A woman in the remote village of Parthrad welcomes Roy. Parthrad is slated to be submerged by a dam.

right evil thing that man has ever made." "If you are religious," she rails, "then remember that this bomb is Man's challenge to God."

Such proclamations, as one can imagine, have not won Roy the approval of the Indian government. She has been attacked by government officials and nationalist citizens as an impractical neo-Luddite with anti-develop-

ment dreams. And her essay on the Sardar Sarovar dam, which scathingly critiques the Indian Supreme Court's decision to lift a four-year stay on further dam construction, earned her a court hearing in response to a state petition claiming there should be a ban on any publications that address the matter while it is still in court. Although Roy has not been penalized, the Supreme Court did find that her essay was "an attempt to undermine the dignity of the court and influence the course of justice."

Such rebuke, however, has only fueled Roy's fire. Last year she donated 1.5 million rupees (about \$35,000), equivalent to her Booker Prize money, to the Narmada Bachao Andolan, the grassroots environmental group that has been working since 1986 to stop the dam project and with whom Roy has been collaborating. And in July she led a contingent of 250 artists, writers and journalists on a weeklong rally against the completion of the Sardar Sarovar project that brought the Narmada Bachao Andolan considerable press.

Although the media certainly will make much of Roy's new role as an activist, she refuses to see her transition from writing fiction to political polemics as unnatural. "I don't find it to be a transition," she said. "I don't recognize the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction; they're artificial boundaries. I don't see myself as an activist. My hope is that *The Cost of Living* will give people a deeper understanding of complex issues. I am a writer, and what I am pleading for as a writer is a worldview, a wider worldview." ■

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Perhaps it is surprising that in this age of the reveal-all autobiography and the million-dollar fiction advance that Arundhati Roy, author of *The God of Small Things*, has turned her keen eye and lyrical tongue to politics. From an American point of view, it feels wholly unnatural, or at least incongruent with the laws of market economics and the writerly ego, that Roy, whose first novel was translated into 33 languages and spent 49 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, would produce a book of political essays rather than a second novel depicting her native India.

But this is exactly what she has done. Roy's second book, *The Cost of Living*, is a fierce polemic against two initiatives the Indian government has undertaken in the name of modern development: its massive dam projects, which have displaced 50 million people, and its emergence as a nuclear weapons state. In both essays, "The Greater Common Good" and "The End of Imagination," Roy applies a novelist's sensibility for human hubris and folly to what she sees as the illusions of India's progress—and the surety of her tone is just as heart-stinging as the descriptiveness that won her the Booker Prize.

"Big dams are to a nation's 'development' what nuclear bombs are to its military arsenal," writes Roy in "The Greater Common Good." "They're both weapons of mass destruction. They're both weapons governments use to control their own people. Both twentieth-century emblems that mark a point in time when human intelligence has outstripped its own instinct for survival. ... They scramble the intelligence that connects eggs to hens, milk to cows, food to forests, water to rivers, air to life, and the earth to human existence."

At a recent lecture at the University of California at Berkeley, Roy said that what propelled her to write essays on the Sardar Sarovar dam and the "Hindu Nuclear Bomb" was a longtime discomfort with privilege topped off by the "obscene" commercial success of *The God of Small Things*. "The private story of this kind of success is not a happy one because I live in India," Roy said. "Before me, the cars are getting sleeker, the gates higher and the poor shit in the street. I just found it impossible to live with this. I felt as if I had punctured a veil in the world."

**Why Arundhati Roy  
won't stop worrying  
and love the bomb**



SAVITA KIRLOSKAR/REUTERS

# No Small Thing

By Tamara Straus



Roy is unusual among today's internationally recognized Indian writers in that she actually lives in India. Unlike fellow Booker Prize-winners Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipul and Ruth Praver Jhabwala, who are of Indian origin but reside abroad, Roy, 39, grew up in Kerala, a state known for its religious heterogeneity, and makes her home in New Delhi. To some degree, with this recent book, she is following in the footsteps of her mother, Mary Roy, who won a landmark Indian Supreme Court verdict that granted Christian women in Kerala the right to their parents' property.

But Roy is very much her own woman. She left home at 16 and lived in a squatters camp in Delhi, ostensibly to make sense of her country, where more than 400 million people are illiterate and live in extreme poverty. Roy's twenties and thirties were peripatetic: She studied architecture, quit to become a beachcombing bohemian, appeared in a movie as a tribal bimbo, married the film's director, Pradeep Krishen, and went on to become a screenwriter. During the four-and-a-half years she wrote *The God of Small Things*, she worked as an aerobics instructor. "My secret was to live my life refusing to be a victim," she says. "Failure—no, I shouldn't say 'failure,' rather, the 'lack of success' never frightened me. I don't believe in rules."

In *The Cost of Living*, Roy does her utmost to dissociate

*Continued on page 45*